

2.4.2 Intent, Policies and Implementation Programs

Intent

The Town Center/Lytton Square, Lower Miller Avenue and East Blithedale/Alto Center commercial areas currently provide convenience shopping close to home in a convenient, safe and attractive environment which compliments the residential character of the town and strengthens a sense of community which is one of Mill Valley's greatest assets. It is the intent of these policies to protect and promote this role by encouraging small-scale, independent retail and service providers which tend to serve the full range of regular needs of nearby neighborhoods, as well as the greater Mill Valley area, through a relatively low intensity, primarily daytime, pedestrian oriented, multiple stop shopping mix of uses. It is also the intent of these policies to recognize and enhance the distinct characteristics and different market orientations of each of the separate commercial areas of Mill Valley as follows:

Town Center/Lytton Square Area should continue to serve as a neighborhood and community shopping area for the western portion of the community as well as the town's civic and cultural center. Special care will have to be taken in the area to prevent primarily visitor serving uses from replacing those which serve the day-to-day needs of local residents.

Lower Miller Avenue (from Locust to Camino Alto) should serve as both a neighborhood shopping area for the adjacent residential neighborhoods as well as a location for office and community-wide service uses such as auto repair/parts uses. However, in this area, care should be taken to maintain a diverse mix of community serving uses and ensure that new service or office uses do not force out those uses which serve the day-to-day needs of the local residents.

East Blithedale/Alto Center Area should function both as a neighborhood oriented shopping area for the adjacent residential neighborhoods as well as an area that provides space for uses which meet the commercial needs of other community residents. Intensive commercial uses or those which are more regional serving in nature should be discouraged.

Redwood Highway Frontage Road Area should continue to serve as a regional serving office and commercial area. Any new development or redevelopment in this area should reinforce this existing pattern of uses while creating an attractive frontage for the community. High quality site planning, architecture and landscaping should be required in all new developments.

Consistent with the other policies in this plan, it is also the City's intent to provide a diverse mix of retail, office uses and employment opportunities for local residents.

Policy C-1: The City shall preserve and enhance the community and neighborhood serving aspects of each of the four commercial areas of the City (Town Center/Lytton Square, Lower Miller Avenue, East Blithedale/Alto Center and Redwood Highway Frontage Road) while maintaining and improving the diversity and mix of commercial opportunities in Mill Valley.

Program C-1-1: The City will analyze the existing parking requirements and commercial zoning restrictions (including permitted and conditionally permitted uses) to determine their impacts in encouraging or discouraging the preferred commercial uses.

Time Frame: Four to nine months after Plan approval.

Program C-1-2: Based upon the analysis completed in program C-1-1 above, the City will establish special zoning regulations for each of the four commercial areas.

Time Frame: Nine to eighteen months after Plan approval.

Program C-1-3: Recognizing the potential problems, the City will study the appropriateness of developing and implementing anti-proliferation policies and ordinances to maintain the preferred mix of commercial uses.

Time Frame: Nine to eighteen months after Plan approval.

Program C-1-4: The City will consider amending the Municipal Code to require use permits for the division of existing large or prominent commercial spaces into smaller spaces for multiple tenants.

Time Frame: As soon as possible, but not later than eighteen months after Plan approval.

Program C-1-5: The City will consider amending the Municipal Code to reflect the Housing Element policy of discouraging the conversion of existing residential units to commercial or office space.

Time Frame: As soon as possible but not later than eighteen months after Plan approval.

Program C-1-6: The City will work cooperatively with local businesses to help them remain in the Mill Valley Community and accommodate reasonable growth of the businesses.

Time Frame: Ongoing during the life of the Plan.

Policy C-2: The Town Center/Lytton Square area should continue to serve as the primary commercial and civic center for the community and the City will develop a plan for public improvements in the area and utilize area specific design guidelines for the review of all development proposals.

Program C-2-1: The City will prepare a prioritized list of capital improvement projects, including urban design, undergrounding, stream restoration, parking and circulation improvements, and will identify funding opportunities and will develop an implementation schedule for the Town Center/Lytton Square area. The City will also consider the creation of a special assessment district as a means to implement special improvement projects.

Time Frame: Twelve to twenty-four months after Plan approval.

Program C-2-2: The City will implement the capital improvement projects on a prioritized basis.

Time Frame: Dependent upon funding availability.

Program C-2-3: The City will utilize the following site planning, building design and landscape guidelines during the required Design Review for all new commercial buildings and all additions or alterations to commercial buildings and the design of public improvements in the Town Center/Lytton Square area:

Guideline 1: **PRESERVATION OF VIEWS** - Views of Mt. Tamalpais as one enters the Town Center/Lytton Square area and views of the hills and trees which form the backdrop for this commercial area should be protected. Development should comply with the following criteria:

- a) The major groupings of trees which form the backdrop to the downtown should be preserved. However, the selective trimming of trees to enhance vistas is acceptable.
- b) Building heights and roof shapes along Miller Avenue, Throckmorton, Lovell and Bayview should not interrupt the hill backdrop.
- c) Trees placed in the Plaza or along the adjoining streets should still allow views of the backdrop.
- d) Utility poles and overhead wires should be undergrounded.

Guideline 2: **CONTRAST BETWEEN NATURAL & MAN-MADE ELEMENTS** - The contrast which presently exists between the natural surroundings and man-made elements of the town center should be preserved and enhanced. Public improvements to the Plaza and street spaces should utilize formal, geometric forms and ordered arrangements and avoid use of materials and designs which have a strong rustic connotation, such as meandering or curvilinear forms, rough stone work, etc.

Guideline 3: **MAINTAINING THE SENSE OF ENCLOSURE** - In order to maintain and reinforce the sense of enclosure which exists in Lytton Square and adjoining streets, the following criteria should be complied with:

- a) The Plaza and the depot building should continue to be a focal point for the Town Center/Lytton Square area.
- b) One story structures should not be allowed along Throckmorton between Madrona and Corte Madera Avenue or along the west side of Miller Avenue from Miller Lane to Throckmorton. Along these frontages, building heights should not exceed two stories above the

street level. Roof shapes should be designed to minimize the impact on views of the hill backdrop.

- c) Building facades, rather than plant materials, should provide the immediate foreground on Lytton Square and Throckmorton.
- d) A continuous building facade should be maintained along the west side of Miller Avenue and along Throckmorton from Madrona to Corte Madera Avenue.
- e) Red tile or fire treated wood shake roofs should continue to be utilized to accentuate building facades.

Guideline 4: ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN - New or remodeled buildings should comply with the following criteria:

- a) Older or distinguished structures should be renovated to respect the original design. If remodeling is proposed, it should be of the entire structure so that the building remains integrated and is not broken into chaotic parts by signing or placement of an incongruous facade on a portion of the structure.
- b) New construction or remodeling of undistinguished structures should be of a high quality architectural design. Effective reinterpretations of the local architectural heritage (what has come to be called Bay Region style) should be encouraged, but not required.
- c) Roofs of structures should be confined to simple forms such as hipped, mansard, low pitched or flat roofs. Horizontal rather than vertical roof lines should be utilized to prevent a jagged, discordant facade line which competes with, rather than complements, the natural backdrop. Where other than flat roofs are used, they should be designed to minimize obstruction of view of the hill backdrop.
- d) Fixtures, art objects or historic architectural details should not be affixed to structures or sited in public spaces or public areas, unless such objects are compatible with the building design.

Guideline 5: EXTERIOR BUILDING MATERIALS - Primary building materials should be wood, brick, stone, or stucco. The prominent use of glossy or shiny finishes such as porcelain enamel panels or metallic surfaces should be avoided. Above the ground floor, glass surfaces should be subordinated to solid wall surfaces.

Guideline 6: BUILDING COLORS - Building colors should be consistent with the following criteria:

- a) Buildings should convey a monochromatic impression highlighted by limited use of bright or intense colors for accessories, such as signs and awnings.

- b) Building colors should generally be muted earth tones, derived from either painted surfaces or natural materials such as brick, wood or stone.
- c) Building colors should avoid dark tones so as to provide a contrast with the natural backdrop.
- d) Large surfaces of intense white should be avoided.
- e) Building colors should tend toward warm, rather than cool, tones.
- f) Building trim and ornamentation should be painted the same color but in a lighter or darker tone than the building, to emphasize these scale-giving elements.

Guideline 7: SIGNS - Commercial signage should comply with the following criteria:

- a) Letters and other symbols should be dimensioned and located so as to be read primarily by the pedestrian.
- b) Blinking, flashing moving or bare tube neon signs should be prohibited.
- c) Freestanding signs higher than four and a half feet should not be permitted.
- d) Internally lit plastic signs should be prohibited.
- e) All commercial signs should be restricted to the ground floor level.
- f) All signs should be designed and located to relate to the design of the entire structure to which applied. The building rather than the individual business establishment should be the basic design unit.
- g) To reinforce the character of the Town Center/Lytton Square area, the use of serif letters such as Times Roman, Clarendon and Century Schoolbook should be encouraged. Overly ornate letter styles, such Old English, should be avoided.
- h) Signs projecting into the public right-of-way should not be permitted, with the following exceptions: Signs projecting no more than three and a half feet and containing a total surface area on one side no greater than five square feet should be allowed if examples of excellent graphic art. Signs should be permitted from the front edge or end panels of awnings. Signs may be fastened or suspended from awnings if perpendicular to the building facade and if they have dimensions not exceeding eight inches in height and 42 inches in length. In all cases, a clearance from sidewalk elevation of seven and one half feet must be maintained.

- i) Any of the following color and material combinations of messages and background are acceptable: (1) background of intense colors, either warm or cool, with painted, applied or engraved letters or symbols in white, black, gold or bronze; (2) background of natural materials or painted surfaces in earth tones with applied letters or symbols in white, black, gold or bronze; (3) background of natural materials with engraved letters or symbols in intense colors, white, black, gold or bronze; (4) gold leaf letters or symbols applied to window surfaces.
- j) Applied letters, rather than painted letters, should be used where the message is placed directly on the primary building surface.
- k) Where sign illumination is provided, it should be indirect.

Guideline 8: LIGHTING - Lighting in this area should comply with the following criteria:

- a) Placement and intensity of lighting should preserve night views of the hill backdrop as one approaches the Town Center/Lytton Square area along Miller Avenue.
- b) Light should be a warm, rather than cool, color.
- c) To protect views of Mt. Tamalpais and the hill backdrop and to achieve a pedestrian-scaled setting, tall pole mounted light fixtures should not be used in the Town Center/Lytton Square area.
- d) Lighting should be supplied in any of the following ways: (1) tree-mounted fixtures; (2) wall or roof-mounted fixtures; (3) low shielded fixtures; (4) floodlighting of buildings, tress, or other objects; (5) pedestrian-scale pole mounted light fixtures, approximately ten to 12 feet in height; or (6) interior display lighting.
- e) New streetlights should be of a simple consistent design to provide a sense of unity in Downtown.

Time Frame: Ongoing during the life of the Plan.

Policy C-3: In order for the Town Center to function as a convenient, resident serving commercial area, adequate parking must continue to be available.

Program C-3-1: The City will closely monitor the parking situation in the Town Center/Lytton Square area and; if the need arises, funding is available and potential sites are identified; will provide additional public parking spaces.

Time Frame: Ongoing during the life of the Plan.

Program C-3-2: The City will require new development to provide the number of parking spaces required by the municipal code or pay the current in-lieu parking fee so that the City can create new public parking spaces.

Time Frame: Ongoing during the life of the Plan.

Policy C-4: Commercial uses should be confined to the main commercial streets and should not be allowed to expand onto primarily residential streets.

Program C-4-1: The following parcels in the downtown area that are currently zoned commercial are inappropriate for commercial use and should be rezoned to the "Higher Density Multi-Family" zoning designation:

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 9 Creek Lane | (28-061-21) |
| 55 Lovell Avenue | (29-055-29, 30) |
| 162 Throckmorton Avenue | (28-055-02) |
| 170 Throckmorton Avenue | (28-055-03) |

Because of the transitional location, if the property at 162 Throckmorton is redeveloped as a residential project and the parking is located mostly below grade, an Adjusted Floor Area Ratio from .4 through and including .6 would be appropriate for the property. [Added by Resolution 92-39]

Time Frame: Within six months of Plan adoption

Program C-4-2: The following parcels in the downtown area that are currently zoned commercial are inappropriate for commercial use and should be rezoned to the "Lower Density Multi-Family" zoning designation:

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 44-62 Miller Avenue | (28-280-02, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06) |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|

Time Frame: Within six months of Plan adoption.

Program C-4-3: The following parcels in the downtown area that are currently zoned CN-Neighborhood Commercial, or PA-Professional Administrative, are inappropriate for commercial or office use and should be rezoned single-family residential:

| | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| 49 Hill Street | (28-021-03) |
| 7 Mountain View | (28-023-11) |

Time Frame: Within six months of Plan adoption.

Policy C-5: The Lower Miller Avenue area, from Camino Alto to Willow, should continue to serve as an office and community and neighborhood serving commercial and service area and the City will develop programs and will utilize area specific design guidelines to enhance the visual appearance of the area.

Program C-5-1: The City will develop a plan, with implementation strategies, that will enhance the community serving aspects of this commercial area. The

plan should particularly be coordinated with any proposals to develop or redevelop the parcels located near the intersection of Miller and Evergreen. Special emphasis should be placed on improving pedestrian circulation, increasing parking and concentrating the commercial uses in a cohesive area.

Time Frame: Two to five years after approval of the Plan, or sooner if necessary to coordinate with development plans for the Miller/Evergreen area.

Program C-5-2: The City should give further consideration to the installation of a traffic signal at the corner of Miller and Montford/LaGoma as a way to make it easier for pedestrians to cross the Miller Avenue right-of-way. If a signal is installed, it should be timed to encourage through traffic to use the arterial route, Miller/Camino Alto, and to discourage use of residential streets, Sycamore and Nelson.

Time Frame: Within two years after approval of the Plan.

Program C-5-3: The City will continue to permit office and community and regional serving automobile related service commercial uses in appropriate locations within the Miller Avenue commercial area, but will discourage any expansion of these uses if other community serving uses, such as food services, cleaning establishments, clothing stores or barber shops are forced out of this commercial area because of this expansion or if the service uses will have adverse impacts on adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as applications for new uses or changes in uses in this area are being reviewed.

Program C-5-4: The City will utilize the following site planning, building design and landscape guidelines during the required Design Review for all new commercial buildings and all additions or alterations to commercial buildings and the design of public improvements in the Lower Miller Avenue commercial area:

Guideline 1: **PRESERVATION OF VIEWS** - Views of adjoining hills and the terminal view of Mt. Tamalpais should be preserved. In order to accomplish this, improvements should comply with the following:

- a) Where median planting occurs, it should not exceed three feet in height when full grown. However, single trees or small groupings of trees might be placed in the median area if spaced to preserve the hill views and expansiveness of the street.
- b) Trees planted at curbside should not exceed 30 feet when full grown. Greater heights are possible for trees planted farther from the curb.
- c) In order that buildings do not obscure or destroy the visual relationship between street space and hill backdrop, building heights should not exceed two stories in height.

- d) When viewed from the roadway, commercial signs should not obscure views of the hills and adjacent forested areas.

Guideline 2: REINFORCING THE LINEAR QUALITY OF MILLER - In order to maintain and reinforce the linear quality of Miller Avenue and its focus on Mt. Tamalpais, the following criteria are suggested:

- a) Provide street trees along the curb line in a nearly continuous, rhythmic pattern. (Note previous restrictions on tree heights.)
- b) Minimize curb cuts to preserve the continuity of the roadway and on-street parking. (For example, curb cuts should not exceed 14 feet in width and a spacing of 20 feet should be provided between curb cuts when provided on the same ownership parcel. Curb cuts should be limited to one curb cut for every 50 feet of street frontage.)
- c) Avoid abrupt changes in the road alignment except at the La Goma/Montford intersection where the directional pattern should be broken to help emphasize this major traffic crossing and the related concentration of business activities.

Guideline 3: SITE DEVELOPMENT - Site development should strive to achieve loosely organized clusters of buildings unified by courtyards and landscape areas or parking lots. The Miller Avenue frontage should provide the automotive access, with actual building activities focusing inward or toward Corte Madera Creek. The latter is intended to help implement a program of renewal of the stream area. The main intent should be to knit together existing and future buildings which may vary substantially in scale.

Guideline 4: ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN - Buildings should comply with the following criteria:

- a) Older or distinguished structures should be renovated to respect the original design. If remodeling is proposed, it should be of the entire structure so that the building remains integrated and is not broken into chaotic parts by signing or placement of an incongruous facade on a portion of the structure.
- b) New buildings or remodeled buildings with undistinguished character should be of high quality architectural design and quaint or nostalgic architecture should be avoided.
- c) Roofs of structures should be confined to simple forms such as hipped, mansard, low pitched or flat roofs. Horizontal rather than vertical forms should be emphasized to achieve the directional quality sought along Miller Avenue and to prevent a jagged, discordant facade line which competes with, rather than complements, the natural backdrop. Where other than flat roofs are used, they should be designed to minimize obstruction of view of the hill backdrop.

Guideline 5: **BUILDING MATERIALS** - Primary building surfaces should generally be natural wood, brick, concrete with fine exposed aggregate or sand blasted finish, or stucco and the prominent use of glossy or shiny finishes, such as steel, aluminum, porcelain enamel panels or metallic finishes should be avoided.

Guideline 6: **BUILDING COLORS** - Building colors should comply with the following criteria:

- a) Buildings should convey a monochromatic impression highlighted by limited use of bright, intense, warm and cool colors for accessories, such as signs and awnings.
- b) Building colors should generally be muted earth tones, derived from either painted surfaces or natural materials such as brick, wood or concrete with fine exposed aggregate.
- c) Building colors should avoid dark tones so as to provide a contrast with the natural backdrop.
- d) Large surfaces of intense white should be avoided.
- e) Building colors should tend toward cool, rather than warm, tones.

Guideline 7: **SIGNS** - Commercial signage should comply with following criteria:

- a) Letters and other symbols may be located on any vertical surface of a building if designed as an integral part of the structure. Vertical surfaces extending above the finished ceiling level of the top story of the structure should be excluded.
- b) Internally lighted signs are appropriate, however the intensity should be carefully reviewed and blinking, flashing, moving or bare tube neon signs are prohibited.
- c) Spotlighting of building mounted or freestanding signs is also appropriate.
- d) Commercial signs should not project into the public right-of-way.
- e) The signs and size of letters and symbols used should be such that they can be easily read by an approaching motorist traveling at 20 to 25 miles per hour.
- f) Commercial signage in this section of Miller Avenue should contrast with the Town Center/Lytton Square in scale (larger), placement (freestanding signs and signs above the ground floor level allowed, and materials (plastic internally lit signs permitted). Further contrast can be created by using sans-serif letters such as Futura, Venus, or News

Gothic along Miller Avenue, in contrast to serif letter styles in the Town Center/Lytton Square area.

Guideline 8: LIGHTING - Lighting in the area should comply with the following criteria:

- a) The placement and intensity of lighting should preserve night views of the hill backdrop as one approaches the Town Center/Lytton Square along Miller Avenue.
- b) Lighting should be warm, rather than cool, in color.
- c) The contrast between the roadway and the adjoining street spaces should be reduced by encouraging soft floodlighting of adjoining buildings and landscaping and use of interior display lighting.
- d) The height of pole mounted light fixtures should not conflict with views of Mt. Tamalpais and surrounding hill and forest areas and should not overpower the adjoining buildings. To achieve this, varying types of lighting are needed.
- e) The intensity of lighting should be reduced slightly as one leaves this segment of Miller Avenue and enters into the upper portion of the Avenue. In turn, intensity should be increased as one enters the Town Center/Lytton Square.

Guideline 9: STREET TREES - The street trees along Miller Avenue should help define the basic form of the street space. The motorist's view, however, should penetrate through and readily recognize adjoining land uses. Identification of individual businesses could be enhanced by signing which identifies major business groupings.

Guideline 10: LANDSCAPING - Landscape materials should not attempt to reproduce in the street spaces the forested character of adjoining areas. Efforts to imitate the natural setting will reduce the visual distinction between these areas. The following criteria is recommended:

- a) Avoid the use of redwoods or other evergreens in the street space.
- b) Street trees should be deciduous and should be planted in a regular pattern.
- c) The selection of street trees should be limited to two or three species to maintain uniformity.
- d) Plant materials used as ground cover, and intended to be seen primarily by motorists, should be massed at a scale appropriate for the travel speed of the street.

Time Frame: Ongoing during the life of the Plan.

Policy C-6: Commercial uses should not be allowed to expand onto the residential side streets.

Program C-6-1: The following parcels that are currently zoned commercial are inappropriate for commercial use and should be rezoned to the "Lower Density Multi-Family" zoning designation:

| | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| 10 Evergreen Avenue | (30-072-06) |
| 12 Evergreen Avenue | (30-072-07) |
| 14 Evergreen Avenue | (30-072-11) |
| 16 Evergreen Avenue | (30-072-10) |

Time Frame: Within six months of Plan adoption.

Policy C-7: The East Blithedale/Alto Center area should continue to serve as a major community and neighborhood serving commercial center and, as opportunities arise, the area should be visually and physically integrated to create an attractive commercial area.

Program C-7-1: If and when proposals are submitted to the City for new uses or the development or redevelopment of parcels within the East Blithedale/Alto Center area, they should be reviewed for conformance with the City's objective to support and enhance the community and neighborhood serving character of the area.

Time Frame: As development or redevelopment is proposed.

Program C-7-2: The design of the intersection of Camino Alto and East Blithedale should continue to direct major Downtown-bound traffic to Miller Avenue via Camino Alto. Traffic sign and the roadway design should clearly emphasize the East Blithedale to Camino Alto alignment, rather than the extension of Blithedale west of Camino Alto, as the major route to the Town Center/Lytton Square area.

Time Frame: Ongoing during the life of the Plan.

Program C-7-3: The City will utilize the following site planning, building design and landscape guidelines during the required Design Review for all new commercial buildings and all additions or alterations to commercial buildings in the East Blithedale/Alto Center area:

Guideline 1: **PRESERVING VIEWS** - Buildings along East Blithedale should be set back to preserve views of the hill backdrop and landscape plans should also be reviewed as to their impact on views.

Guideline 2: **SCREENING OF PARKING AREAS** - Where feasible, parking should be located under the building or at a lower grade than the structures and East Blithedale in order to screen the cars and the parking lot from view.

Guideline 3: **INTEGRATION BETWEEN BUILDINGS** - Even though incrementally developed on separate parcels, where the opportunity arises as new buildings are built or existing buildings are remodeled, efforts should be made to visually and physically integrate buildings, out door spaces and vehicle and pedestrian circulation. Special attention should be given to integrating the property located at 759 East Blithedale with the rest of the Alto Shopping Center.

Guideline 4: **BUILDING HEIGHTS** - Buildings within this area should be limited to two stories.

Guideline 5: **BUILDING MATERIALS, COLORS & FORMS** - New or remodeled buildings should be designed to create a harmonious relationship among the individual structures forming larger groups. To accomplish this, the following measures should be taken:

- a) A consistent set of materials, colors, and building forms should be utilized.
- b) Roofs of structures should be confined to simple forms such as low pitched, hipped, or mansard. Because of the high visibility of the roof surfaces from surrounding hillside residential properties, it is especially important that design of roofs and the screening of the mechanical equipment be given special attention.

Guideline 6: **LANDSCAPING** - Landscaping should comply with the following criteria:

- a) In order to relate to the Enchanted Knolls side of the road, trees planted along the shopping center side of East Blithedale, from Ashford to Lomita, should be deciduous and should be planted in a random but generally continuous fashion.
- b) Where feasible, parking lots and parked cars should be screened from view by berms and/or landscaping.

Guideline 7: **SIGNS** - Commercial signage should comply with the following criteria:

- a) Letters and other symbols may be located on any vertical surface of a building if designed as an integral part of the structure. Vertical surfaces extending above the finished ceiling level of the top story of the structure should be excluded.
- b) Blinking, flashing, moving or bare tube neon signs are prohibited.
- c) While signs in this area should generally have indirect illumination, internally lighted signs may be appropriate in certain locations particularly west of Lomita Drive but special care should be taken to

ensure that the illumination does not adversely affect hillside residential areas.

- d) As an alternative to internally illuminated signs, "halo" type or spotlighted building mounted or freestanding signs should be encouraged.
- e) Commercial signs should not project into the public right-of-way.
- f) The signs and size of letters and symbols used on signs oriented toward East Blithedale should be such that they can be easily read by an approaching motorist traveling at 20 to 25 miles per hours.
- g) Commercial signage in this area should contrast with the Town Center/Lytton Square in scale (larger), placement (freestanding signs and signs above the ground floor level allowed), and materials (plastic internally illuminated signs permitted in some locations). Further contrast can be created by using sans-serif letters such as Futura, Venus, or News Gothic in contrast to serif letter styles in the Town Center/Lytton Square area.

Guideline 8: **LIGHTING** - Building and parking lot lighting along East Blithedale should be a warm, rather than cool color. Parking lot lighting should be kept at a low level of illumination.

Time Frame: Ongoing during the life of the Plan.

Policy C-8: New commercial uses should be confined to the existing commercial areas and should not be allowed to encroach beyond their existing boundaries.

Program C-8-1: The following parcels currently zoned commercial are either already developed with a residential use or are inappropriate for commercial redevelopment and should be rezoned to the "Lower Density Multi-Family" zoning designation:

250 Camino Alto/Disabled Housing Project (30-125-07)
290 Camino Alto/Dill & Sederberg (30-132-04). The existing construction yard use, or a similar use, may continue on this property. However, if the property is redeveloped, it should be with a residential use.

Time Frame: Within six months of Plan adoption.

Program C-8-2: The following currently undeveloped parcel that is now zoned for office use is inappropriate for office use and should be rezoned to the "Lower Density Multi-Family" zoning designation:

Hillside next to 619 East Blithedale/Kostic (30-021-47)

Time Frame: Within six months of Plan adoption.

Program C-8-3: Because of its small size, proximity to East Blithedale and location adjacent to residential areas, the following parcel currently zoned multi-family residential is inappropriate for either residential or commercial use and should be rezoned to allow only redevelopment for office use.

5 Ashford Ave./Redwood Oil Co. (30-340-16)

Time Frame: Within six months of Plan adoption.

Policy C-9: The Redwood Highway Frontage Road commercial area should continue to function as a regional as well as a community serving office and commercial area and, as the opportunities arise, the City will work with property owners to integrate individual projects and improve the appearance of this highly visible commercial area.

Program C-9-1: The City will develop an overall plan, with implementation strategies, to provide appropriate regional serving commercial uses including office, hotel and retail uses. The plan will provide more specific guidelines for achieving design excellence suitable for Mill Valley's primary frontage on Highway 101 including the installation of landscaping along the frontage road.

Time Frame: As funding is available.

Program C-9-2: The City will utilize the following site planning, building design and landscape guidelines during the required Design Review for all new commercial buildings and all additions or alterations to commercial buildings in the Redwood Highway Frontage Road area:

Guideline 1: **TAKING ADVANTAGE OF BAYFRONT LOCATION** - All new commercial buildings and all remodeling projects on existing projects in this area should take advantage of the bayfront location and, to the maximum extent feasible, should be oriented to the shoreline and the maximum feasible public access consistent with the project and protection of important habitat areas should be provided. This is particularly important if and when proposals are submitted to the City for redevelopment of the parcels at both the northern and southern ends of this commercial area. In addition, as the opportunities arise, a continuous public shoreline path should be developed from Hamilton Drive to the north end of the Richardson Bay Bridge.

Guideline 2: **TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HIGHWAY 101 FRONTAGE** - All new commercial buildings and all remodeling projects should give special consideration to the architectural and landscaping appearance from Highway 101 and should reflect Mill Valley's commitment to design excellence.

Guideline 3: **PRESERVING VIEWS** - Buildings in this area should be located to preserve some view corridors to the water and should be set back to avoid a wall effect along the frontage road. Landscape plans should also be reviewed as to their impact on view corridors to the shoreline.

Guideline 4: **SCREENING OF PARKING AREAS** - Where feasible, parking should be located under a second story portion of the building or at a lower grade than the structures in order to screen the cars and the parking lots from view.

Guideline 5: **INTEGRATION BETWEEN BUILDINGS** - Even though incrementally developed on separate parcels, where the opportunity arises as new buildings are built or existing buildings are remodeled, efforts should be made to physically integrate buildings out door spaces and vehicle and pedestrian circulation.

Guideline 6: **BUILDING HEIGHTS** - Buildings within this area should predominately be two stories with some three-story elements with three story areas allowed where they add variety and architectural interest.

Guideline 7: **BUILDING MATERIALS, COLORS & FORMS** - New or remodeled buildings should be designed to create a harmonious relationship among the individual structures forming larger groups. To accomplish this, the following measures should be taken:

- a) A consistent set of materials, colors, and building forms should be utilized.
- b) Roofs of structures should be confined to simple forms such as low pitched, hipped, or mansard. Because of the high visibility of the area, it is especially important that all mechanical equipment is appropriately screened.
- c) As opportunities arise, street trees and other appropriate landscaping should be installed along the frontage road.

Guideline 8: **LANDSCAPING** - Landscaping should comply with the following criteria:

- a) Plant material should be chosen to be appropriate for the waterfront location.
- b) Where feasible, parking lots and parked cars should be screened from view by berms and/or landscaping.

Guideline 9: **SIGNS** - Commercial signage should comply with the following criteria:

- a) Letters and other symbols may be located on any vertical surface of a building if designed as an integral part of the structure. Vertical surfaces extending above the finished ceiling level of the top story of the structure should be excluded.
- b) Blinking, flashing, moving or bare tube neon signs are prohibited.

- c) Internally lighted signs are appropriate in this location but special care should be taken to ensure that the illumination does not create excessive glare.
- d) As an alternative to internally illuminated signs, "halo" type or spotlighted building mounted or freestanding signs are also appropriate.
- e) Commercial signs should not project into the public right-of-way.
- f) The signs and size of letters and symbols used on signs should be such that they can be easily read by an approaching motorist traveling on the frontage road.
- g) Because for the freeway orientation of this area, commercial signage should contrast with other areas scale (larger), placement (freestanding signs and signs above the ground floor level allowed), and materials (plastic internally illuminated signs).

Guideline 10: LIGHTING - Building and parking lot lighting in this area should be a warm, rather than cool color. Parking lot lighting should be kept at a low level of illumination because of the residential areas that are adjacent to and look down upon this area.

Time Frame: Ongoing during the life of the Plan.

2.4.3 Commercial Building Intensity and Buildout Potential

Existing Floor Area Ratios (FAR) were calculated for each of the four commercial areas within Mill Valley in order to prepare commercial building intensity standards to meet the requirements of State law. As indicated below, the existing FAR varies considerably from one commercial district to another. Reinforcing the village center character, relatively high floor area ratios occur in the Town Center/Lytton Square area, with more moderate floor area ratios in the Lower Miller Avenue area and lower, more typical suburban, floor area ratios in the East Blithedale/Alto Center and Redwood Highway Frontage Road areas. FAR is a measure of the total square footage of a building in relation to the size of its lot, and is one factor which describes the intensity of current development. It can be used to evaluate the compatibility of proposed buildings with the surrounding commercial area. For example, a building designed for the Town Center/Lytton Square area may not be suitable for the East Blithedale/Alto Center or the Redwood Highway Frontage Road areas because the relationship of the size of the building to the lot area is not similar in each of these areas.

To calculate FAR, the total building square footage (gross floor area) is divided by the land area. This figure does not include land dedicated for public streets. If a building occupies an entire site and is one-story in height, the FAR would be 1.0. If a two-story building occupies half of the site, the FAR would also be 1.0. Buildings which do not cover the entire site and are one-story high have FAR calculations of less than one.