

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The preservation of the City of Watsonville's rich historical and cultural resources, combined with the preservation of the natural beauty and rural backdrop of the Pajaro Valley, are the central issues and purposes of this chapter. Archeological resources are discussed in the Environmental Resource Management chapter (9).

The character of the city can be traced back to its incorporation in 1868. Many structures of architectural significance are credited to William Henry Weeks (1864-1936), the most prolific architect ever to reside in Watsonville. Watsonville's Historic Property Inventory, conducted by Professor Cardwell of University of California at Berkeley, contains a listing of 41 structures designed or remodeled by this famous architect. He designed St. Patrick's Catholic Church, the Tuttle Mansion, Watsonville High School, the Hotel Resetar, the Park Plaza bandstand, and many other impressive private residences and public buildings in Watsonville and Santa Cruz County.

The city grew slowly during its first 100 years, and the overall appearance changed little. In 1975, the pace of urban growth accelerated with the expansion of jobs and construction of new homes. The City Council became concerned about the visual impacts of the new growth and created the Design Review Commission. The Design Review Commission's charge has been the preservation of the city's architectural heritage and the design review of new development proposals. The Design Review Guidelines were adopted by the Commission as a tool to evaluate development proposals. In 1993 the duties of the Design Review Commission were delegated to the Planning Commission and Zoning Administrator.

## COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Many residents of Watsonville expressed their concerns about community character and visual appearance at the General Plan Public Workshops. At times these issues were expressed as intangible concerns about the overall quality of urban life, but in other cases specific visual amenities were mentioned. The General Plan Questionnaire contained two specific statements on urban beautification: (1) "The City's beautification efforts should be intensified;" and, (2) "More landscaping and tree planting along city streets is needed." The public expressed strong support for both these issues, with 77 percent in favor of intensified city beautification efforts and 63 percent in favor of more trees along city streets.



*Watsonville has an excellent stock of historical housing, such as the Rogers Mansion on East Lake Avenue.*

Other public concerns about urban design and scenic resource issues include:

1. Can Watsonville retain and enhance the visual theme established by the presence of many Victorian style structures?
2. Can new development be made visually compatible with existing structures?

3. Can the rural and open space vistas around Watsonville be preserved while accommodating orderly urban development?
4. Can the visual appearance of the central business district be improved?

#### DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

In reviewing new projects, the City considers the following:

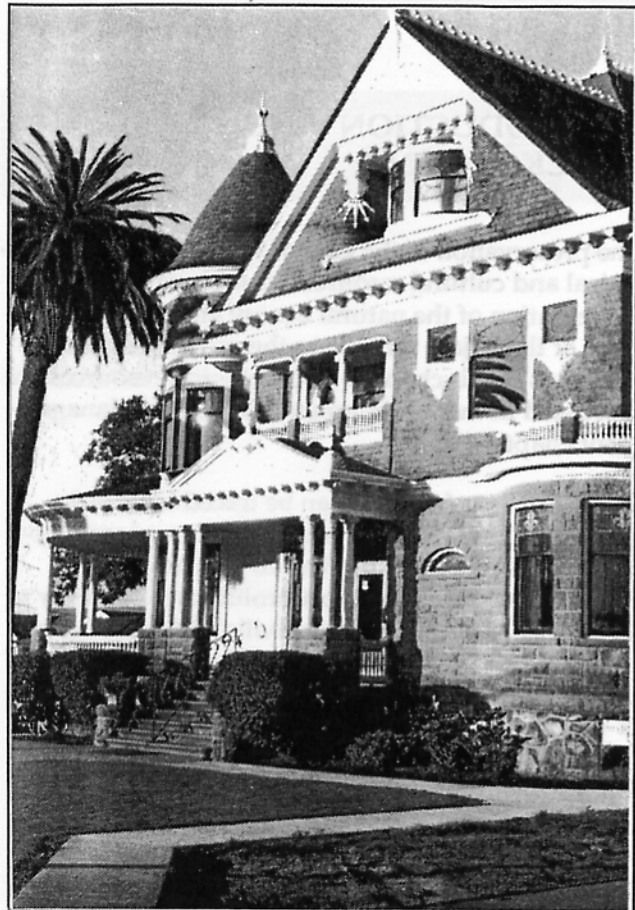
**Site Planning.** Guidelines emphasize suitability of the site for its proposed use and proposed building, efficiency of circulation and parking design, and building placement and orientation, particularly with regard to environmentally sensitive areas.

**Building Design.** Guidelines emphasize harmony with surrounding neighborhood, including materials, texture, color, height, and architectural detail.

**Landscaping.** Planting materials, lighting, fencing, and signs are considered by the City in order to ensure a safe and visually pleasing project.

As the city develops through time, the challenge is to ensure that the "new" does not destroy the integrity of the "old." Good urban design is not simply a matter of historic preservation, the whole urban fabric must be taken into consideration, including: the design of the street pattern, areas used for vehicle parking, architectural design, street landscaping, urban open spaces, street furniture such as lighting fixtures, commercial signs, and many other physical elements.

To maintain and improve overall urban appearance, it is neither necessary nor desirable to adopt formal design regulations for any particular architectural style, be it traditional or contemporary. Room for creativity in building design and site orientation should be maintained. General guidelines for appropriate design and adaptation to specific site conditions are important to achieve the goals and policies of this chapter.



*The Tuttle Mansion on East Lake Avenue contributes to Watsonville's rich architectural heritage and scenic resources.*

#### SCENIC ROUTES

In addition to considerations related to the built environment, the scenic quality of Watsonville is also enhanced through the preservation of significant natural features, which include wetlands, sloughs, rivers, lakes, hillside, and stands of vegetation. These resources are important not only for their visual contribution to the city, but also for their passive recreational and educational opportunities. The quality of life in Watsonville is, in part, a reflection of a balance between the built environment and conservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

There are many scenic routes serving the transportation needs of the City of Watsonville. These routes provide access to scenic resources which include the broad sweep of the Pajaro Valley, the hills and mountains which frame the valley floor, coastal lands, and the urban skyline. Segments of state highways and local streets within the city and the Planning Area which satisfy certain criteria have been designated as scenic. Each designated scenic route must satisfy a minimum of four of the following criteria:

- presence of views and vistas
- absence of clutter
- presence of interesting features
- presence of significant vegetation

- visual variety and
- service as a gateway.

Watsonville's scenic routes, summarized in Figure 5-1 and described below, will benefit from the enhancement opportunities available through land use controls and implementation of General Plan policies.

The state highways included in this designation are Highway 1, Highway 152 and Highway 129. Highway 1 and Highway 152 are currently also included in the *California Master Plan of State Highways Eligible for Official Scenic Highway Designation*. The City will work with Caltrans to establish the boundaries of the scenic corridor, the land area which can be seen from

**Figure 5-1 Criteria for Scenic Streets and Highway Designations**

Scenic Route	Criteria					
	Background Views	Absence of Clutter	Interesting Features	Significant Vegetation	Variety	Gateway
East Lake Ave. (Hwy. 152) – Main St. to Carlton Rd.	•		•	•	•	•
East Beach St. – Main St. to Beck St.	•		•	•	•	
Main St. – Hwy. 1 to Pajaro River	•	•	•	•	•	•
Harkins Slough Rd.	•	•	•	•	•	•
Airport Blvd.	•		•	•	•	•
Brewington Ave. – Montecito Ave. to East Lake Ave.		•	•	•	•	
Holohan Rd.	•	•	•	•		
Riverside Dr. (Hwy 129) – Hwy. 1 to Salsipuedes Creek	•		•	•	•	•
Highway 1	•	•	•	•	•	

Source: Watsonville Planning Department, 1989



the road, for segments of state highway within the City limits and the Planning Area. The City, while not financially responsible for corridor protection, has developed an implementation program for the protection of these scenic routes.

Scenic corridors for the streets not included in the state highway system are also defined as those land areas which can be seen from the road. Design criteria within these corridors are proposed to be developed by the City.

The following routes are proposed for scenic street and highway designations and are shown in Figure 5-2:

**East Lake Avenue – Highway 152 from Main Street to Carlton Road.** A gateway to the Planning Area from Hecker Pass, East Lake Avenue provides views of the surrounding hills and mountains, and passes by several notable historic structures. Corridor enhancements will benefit this route.

**East Beach Street – Main Street to Beck Street.** East Beach Street affords views of historic structures and areas of town, including the plaza and central commercial center, Watsonville High School, and three of the city's designated historic houses.

**Main Street – Highway 1 to the Pajaro River.** A four-lane landscaped gateway, Main Street provides a variety of views of developed commercial shopping centers, Ramsay Park, historic downtown Watsonville, the plaza, and the Pajaro River.

**Harkins Slough Road.** More than any other route in the city or Planning Area, Harkins Slough Road provides a close-up view of the unique beauty of the area's sloughs and marshes. It also passes Ramsay Park and, crossing the freeway, affords broad views of the entire valley. As urbanization occurs, major roadway improvements will be required. Road improvements will include landscaping to maintain the "country road" feeling.

**Airport Boulevard.** Serving the airport and light industrial area of Watsonville, Airport Boulevard, a northern gateway to the city, has unlimited views to the north and west of areas which will remain in predominantly natural open space uses. New develop-

ment occurring along the road contributes to the scenic qualities of the corridor with attractive building design and landscaping. Airport Boulevard provides a dramatic entry into Watsonville's rural character as it crosses Corralitos Creek eastward and shifts from an urban commercial area to a rural agricultural area.

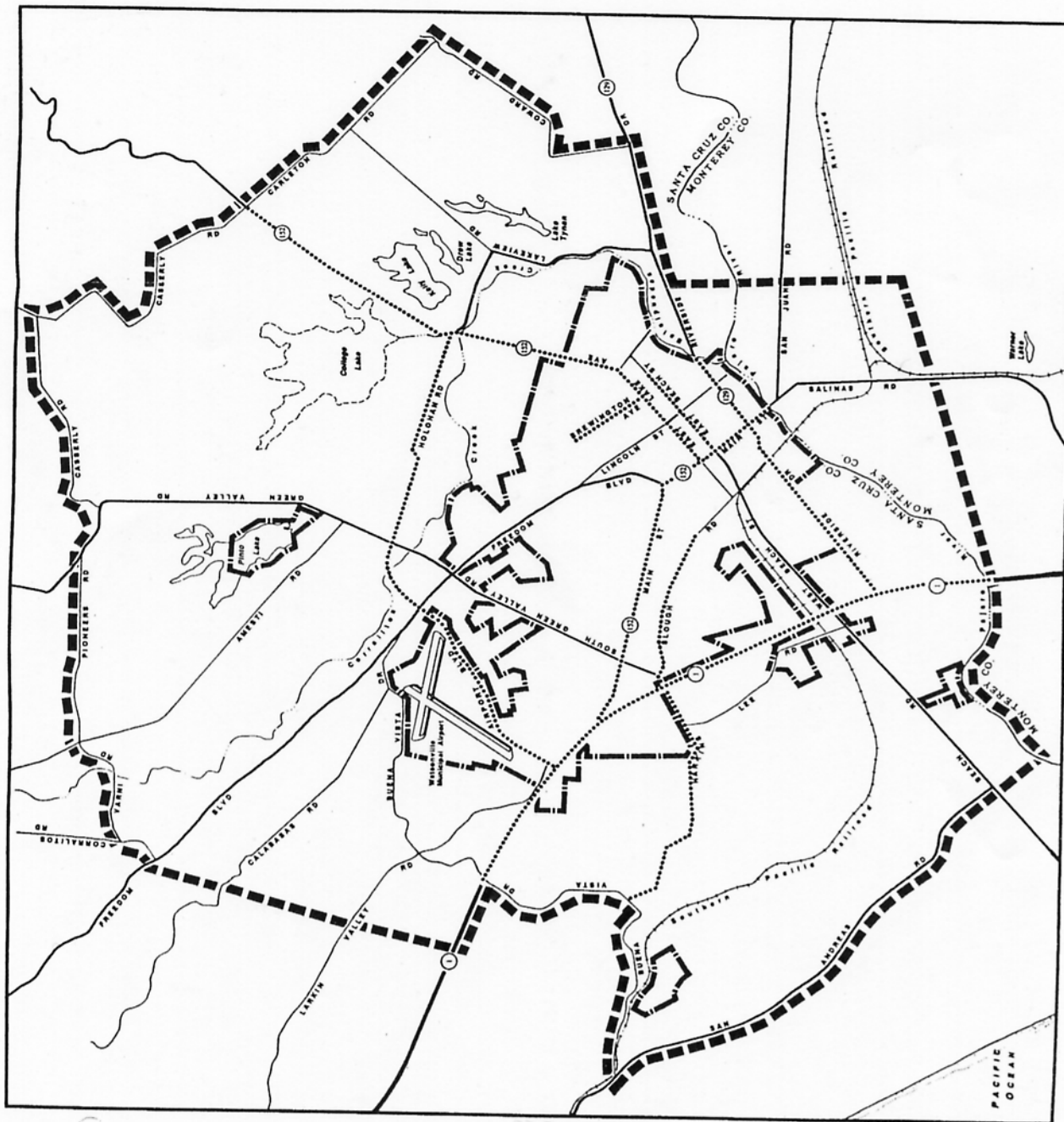
**Brewington Avenue – Montecito Avenue to East Lake Avenue.** Brewington Avenue, a segment of Watsonville's residential area, serves as a showcase of home design, reflecting not only a variety of styles and time periods, but an abundance of beautiful, well-maintained yards. The location of two of Watsonville's older schools, which are fine examples of public architecture, add to the scenic qualities which characterize this street.

**Holohan Road – Paralleling Corralitos Creek, between Green Valley Road and East Lake Avenue.** Holohan Road provides the traveler with uninterrupted views of the orchards and agricultural uses outside the city and the hills which form the backdrop and boundary of the Pajaro Valley.

**Riverside Drive – Highway 129 from Highway 1 to Salsipuedes Creek.** Riverside Drive from the Highway 1 interchange eastward (Highway 129), provides the traveler with a cross-sectional view of Watsonville, past and present. Emerging from the fields adjacent to Highway 1 and the Pajaro River, the highway passes the food processing warehouses which have historically been the backbone of the city. The landscaped portion of this entry to the city continues across the railroad tracks to Main Street, passing through the older residential area and ending (or beginning) at the other southeastern gateway to the city, Salsipuedes Creek. In addition to the creek views, a landscaped island identifies the transition to or from the urban area.

**Highway 1.** Famous throughout the world for its scenic vistas, Highway 1 in the Watsonville area is well landscaped and situated so as to provide views of the entire valley from the Monterey Bay to the hills. Particularly attractive views to the west reveal sloughs and rolling hills used for grazing.





### KEY

..... Scenic Routes

————— Watsonville City Limits as of 1992

————— Planning Area Boundary

CITY OF WATSONVILLE

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

## Scenic Routes

Source: City of Watsonville Planning Department, 1992

This graphic is not intended to be used for site-specific decision making. Consult the City or County for detailed information.

Scale in Feet

Figure 5-2

## GOALS FOR URBAN DESIGN AND SCENIC RESOURCES

The City has set the following goals to preserve and enhance the visual resources of Watsonville:

### Goal 5.1 Visual Resources

Preserve and enhance the built and natural visual resources within Watsonville.

### Goal 5.2 Community Appearance

Blend new development with recognized values of community appearance and scenic qualities, and ensure that new development enhances, rather than detracts from, its surroundings.

### Goal 5.3 Signs

Ensure that commercial signs do not detract from street appearance or create hazardous visual distractions.

### Goal 5.4 Downtown

Preserve and enhance the visual appearance of Main Street from the Pajaro River Bridge to Freedom Boulevard.

### Goal 5.5 Viewscape

Preserve scenic rural qualities surrounding the urbanized portions of the Planning Area.

### Goal 5.6 Urban Design

Achieve high standards of street, site and building design that are both efficient, and aesthetically pleasing.

### Goal 5.7 Heritage Preservation

Enhance and protect structures, sites, and other landmarks that give residents of the Planning Area a link with their cultural heritage.

### Goal 5.8 Urban Beautification

Support public and private urban beautification activities and promote pride in community appearance.

### Goal 5.9 Scenic Corridors

Protect and enhance the views of and from the scenic streets and highways in Watsonville and the Planning Area.

### Goal 5.10 Natural Scenic Resources

Conserve and enhance natural resources that contribute to the visual, recreational, and educational aesthetics of Watsonville. Such resources include: wetlands, sloughs, rivers, lakes, hillsides and stands of vegetation.

## POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

### Policy 5.A Project Design Review

The preservation of visual resources shall be accomplished through the design review process.

#### Implementation Measures

- 5.A.1 Design Review Applications – The City shall use and periodically update the Design Review Guidelines for project evaluation.
- 5.A.2 Design Information Requirements – Application requirements for projects to meet the design review criteria shall include a preliminary site plan, exterior elevations, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, grading, parking plans, colors, sign locations and elevations, fence height and design, and a landscape plan.
- 5.A.3 Design Review – The City shall require that all new construction projects and remodeling or renovation projects (except single-family homes) over a specified value, as designated from time to time by the City Council, undergo design review according to chapter 14-11 of the Watsonville Municipal Code.
- 5.A.4 Development Standards – In addition to the Design Review Guidelines, the City shall use the adopted standards for multiple family

residential developments to ensure that medium- and high-density development is designed so as to enhance rather than detract from the urban environment.

- 5.A.5 Scenic Resources** – The City shall, through its design review process, consider the impact of the development on both the visual quality of the built environment and the scenic quality of natural features including sloughs, wetland, rivers, lakes, hillsides and stands of vegetation.

### **Policy 5.B Design Consistency**

The City shall review new development proposals to encourage high standards of urban design and to ensure that elements of architectural design and site orientation do not degrade or conflict with the appearance of existing structures.

#### **Implementation Measures**

- 5.B.1 Visual Compatibility** – Whenever new development is proposed next to historic landmarks or buildings considered to be visually significant, the design review process shall be used to maintain or create visual harmony between the new and old structures.
- 5.B.2 Neighborhood Identity** – New development in established neighborhoods shall be encouraged to utilize the surrounding architectural themes and/or materials to promote neighborhood harmony and identity.
- 5.B.3 Enhancement** – The City shall utilize the development standards, zoning ordinance regulations for each district, and the design review guidelines to ensure that new development is an asset to the existing neighborhood and community with regard to parking, landscaping, open space, and project design.

### **Policy 5.C Sign Control**

The design review process shall be used to ensure that signs (materials, size, color, lettering and location) are aesthetically pleasing and compatible with surroundings.

#### **Implementation Measures**

- 5.C.1 Conditions on Development** – Conditions shall be placed on proposed development to ensure that Design Review Guidelines for signs and advertising devices are followed, and that criteria for specific zoning districts are implemented.
- 5.C.2 Uniform Sign Program** – In order to discourage visual clutter, the City shall require integrated sign programs for projects with multiple business tenants.

### **Policy 5.D Downtown Design Plan**

The City shall prepare, adopt, and implement a design plan for the urban design, circulation, parking, and commercial sign location within the central business district.

#### **Implementation Measures**

- 5.D.1 Project Requirements** – Projects within the central business district (CBD) shall be required to follow the guidelines of the design plan as a condition of approval.

### **Policy 5.E Viewscape Protection**

The City shall use the General Plan Land Use chapter and the design review process to ensure that major new development projects do not impact scenic vistas now enjoyed throughout the city.

#### **Implementation Measures**

- 5.E.1 Scenic Vistas** – Site orientation and building bulk conditions shall be used to protect scenic vistas.
- 5.E.2 Peripheral Open Space** – Provision of a greenbelt shall be used to preserve and enhance the urban viewscape as well as to define the limits for urban use.

### **Policy 5.F Design Factors**

The design review process shall combine elements of aesthetics with considerations for project efficiency.



**Implementation Measures**

**5.E1** Project Appearance Factors – Considerations for project appearance shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Compatibility with adjacent architectural styles
- b. Respect for design features of the original architectural style for building renovation projects
- c. Avoidance of monotonous expanses of blank walls, including fire walls
- d. Orientation of the project with respect to natural topography, the retention of trees, and significant natural habitat
- e. Placement and screening of trash containers from view and adequacy of the type and number of trash containers provided on site
- f. Undergrounding of utility lines and meter boxes and screening of transformers
- g. Visual interest of exterior finishes and colors
- h. Discrete placement of microwave dish and satellite antennas
- i. Placement and design of external lighting fixtures to blend with the architectural style, provide safe areas, and avoid off-site glare.

**5.E2** Project Efficiency Factors – Consideration for project efficiency shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. Project site orientation with respect to privacy, views, and solar access of neighboring structures
- b. Design of project access and parking
- c. Provision for safe and convenient pedestrian movement
- d. Location and efficiency of loading and service docks
- e. Location and accessibility of utility meters inspection points

- f. Ease of maintenance of exterior finishes
- g. Placement of structures for solar considerations
- h. The selection of landscape planting materials for summer shade, privacy, screening, erosion control, and water conservation
- i. Adequate irrigation for landscaped areas.

**Policy 5.G Historic Preservation**

The City shall evaluate and make recommendations for the preservation of historic structures, landmarks, and buildings of particular architectural interest.

**Implementation Measures**

- 5.G.1** Building Conditions – The City shall place conditions on building renovation and construction near architecturally significant structures to protect their architectural integrity and ensure that Watsonville's charm and heritage are not destroyed.
- 5.G.2** Historic Inventory – The City shall maintain and periodically update an inventory of historic and architecturally significant buildings.
- 5.G.3** Historic Designation – The City shall continue to designate and/or take action to protect structures of special character, architectural value, and aesthetic value. Structures include significant buildings, homes, and landmark features.
- 5.G.4** Preservation Zoning – The City shall enact historic preservation zoning to protect significant examples of the city's cultural and architectural heritage.
- 5.G.5** Private Participation – The City shall encourage and provide incentives for the private preservation and restoration of historic and architecturally interesting buildings.

### Policy 5.H Streetscape Beautification

The City shall promote streetscape beautification activities and civic pride in community appearance.

#### Implementation Measures

- 5.H.1 Street Tree Planting – The City shall pursue a citywide program of tree planting and maintenance. The use of appropriate trees shall take into consideration the need to maintain visual clearance at intersections and other public safety concerns.
- 5.H.2 Beautification Awards – The City shall recognize and award private efforts to enhance city appearance.
- 5.H.3 Gateways – The City shall identify areas which serve as gateways or entry points to the city and develop landscaping and signing to highlight those points.
- 5.H.4 Property Maintenance – Maintenance of building exteriors and landscaping shall be addressed through the design review process. Visual clutter in yards shall be prevented through enforcement of zoning ordinance restrictions on parking and storage in front and side yards.

### Policy 5.I Scenic Streets And Highways

The City shall identify scenic streets and highways in the Planning Area according to adopted criteria.

#### Implementation Measures

- 5.I.1 Criteria for Designation – The following criteria may be considered as a basis for adopting a route as scenic.
  - a. Presence of background views and natural vistas.
  - b. Absence of clutter along the street or road.
  - c. Location of interesting features such as historic or architecturally significant structures.

- d. Significant vegetation, either natural or landscaped.
- e. Presence of a variety of views.
- f. Presence of a “gateway” or entry to the city along the route.

- 5.I.2 City and County Cooperation – The City shall work with Santa Cruz County to establish appropriate sign control and land uses for those routes designated as scenic in the General Plan but outside the City's jurisdiction.

- 5.I.3 Guidelines and Standards – The City shall adopt standards or guidelines for development along designated scenic corridors and future corridors considered for designation.

### Policy 5.J Scenic Natural Resources

The City shall conserve and enhance natural resources that contribute to the visual, recreational, and educational aesthetics of Watsonville. Such resources include: wetlands, sloughs, rivers, lakes, hillsides, and stands of vegetation.

#### Implementation Measures

- 5.J.1 Natural Heritage Preservation – The City should conserve and enhance the natural resource areas of the community that give residents passive recreational and educational opportunities connected with the natural heritage of Watsonville.
- 5.J.2 Compatibility – Whenever a new development is proposed next to a natural scenic resource, the design review process will be used to maintain or create visual harmony between new and old structures and their natural setting.

The goals and policies for urban design and preservation of Planning Area scenic resources are expressed below in the form of a matrix. This matrix connects the broad community goals with the more specific policies for implementation.

**Urban Design and Scenic Routes Goals and Policies**

		Policies									
		5A	5B	5C	5D	5E	5F	5G	5H	5I	5J
Goals	5.1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
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*Photo: Courtesy of the Register-Pajaronian*

*Honors were given for preserving history at the Jalisco Restaurant on Main Street.*