

# DESIGN TRADITIONS OF OLD TOWN

**Draft: November 23, 2011**

This photo essay highlights some of the distinctive design features of buildings in Old Town that contribute to its traditional character. This focuses on commercial buildings, including retail, office and hotels facilities, which generally define the core of the community.

## GENERAL DESIGN FEATURES

This section illustrates design principles that are exhibited in the design traditions of Old Town San Diego. These are features that are found in many periods and types of development, and that are signature features of the community.

## BUILDING FORMS

The primary form of an individual building is a simple geometric solid... a rectangular volume in most cases.



### Building Form

- Articulation of Building Mass
- Variation in Wall Planes

## ARTICULATION OF BUILDING MASS



### Articulation Methods:

#### Wall planes

- Changes in profiles
- Offsets in wall planes
- Offsets in ridge lines

#### Inset features:

- Arcades
- Balconies

#### Projecting features:

- Exterior stairs
- Balconies
- Deep eaves overhang

## VARIATION IN WALL PLANES

Variations in wall planes, which occur as offsets for the entire height of a building, and also as step-backs in height from one to two, and sometimes three stories, reduce perceived scale, and provide visual interest in changing shadows and forms in a building.



### One-story, shed roof element:

- Reduces scale
- Provides visual interest

## Roof Forms



### Key features:

- Tile or shingle
- Extended eaves
- Exposed rafters/purlins
- Varied heights

# Roof forms



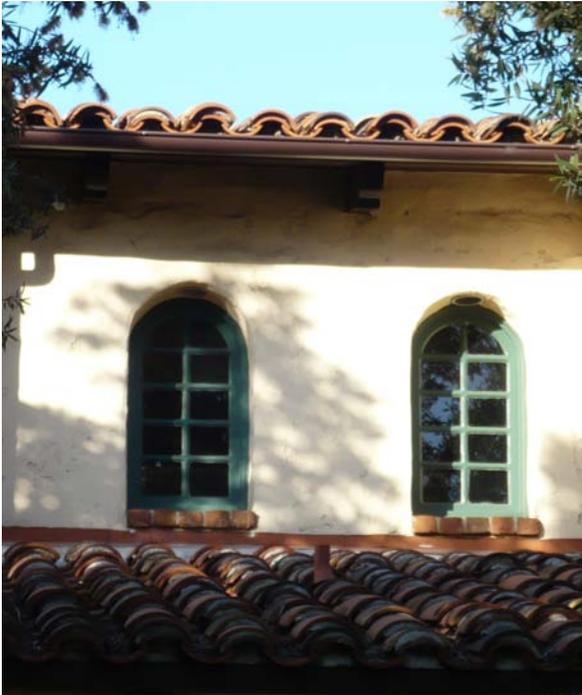
## Towers



### Applications:

- To anchor a corner
- Offset in wall plane
- Internal of primary building mass

# WINDOWS



**Key Features:**

- Substantial depth
- Strong profile of frame members
- Rectangular and arched



## WINDOWS



### Key Features:

- Substantial depth
- Strong profile of frame members
- Rectangular and arched



# DOORS & ENTRIES



- Key features:**
- Deep inset
  - Substantial material
  - Accented details
  - Primarily wood

## BALCONIES - INTEGRATED IN WALL PLANES

These types appear to be cut into the primary wall plane, or they extend entirely across it, such that they become the primary surface themselves.



## BALCONIES & ARCADES

Balconies and arcades contribute to the visual interest of buildings by providing variation in wall surfaces. Some project from the primary wall plane, while other are more integral to it, sometimes appearing to be "cut in" to the facade.



### Key features:

- Materials consistent with primary wall or other trim elements
- Firmly anchored/attached
- Substantial depth

## BALCONIES - AS SUBORDINATE, ATTACHED ELEMENTS



### Key Features:

- Wood Railings
- Generally simple balustrades
- Detailing at porch supports and brackets

## PORTICOS & ARCADES

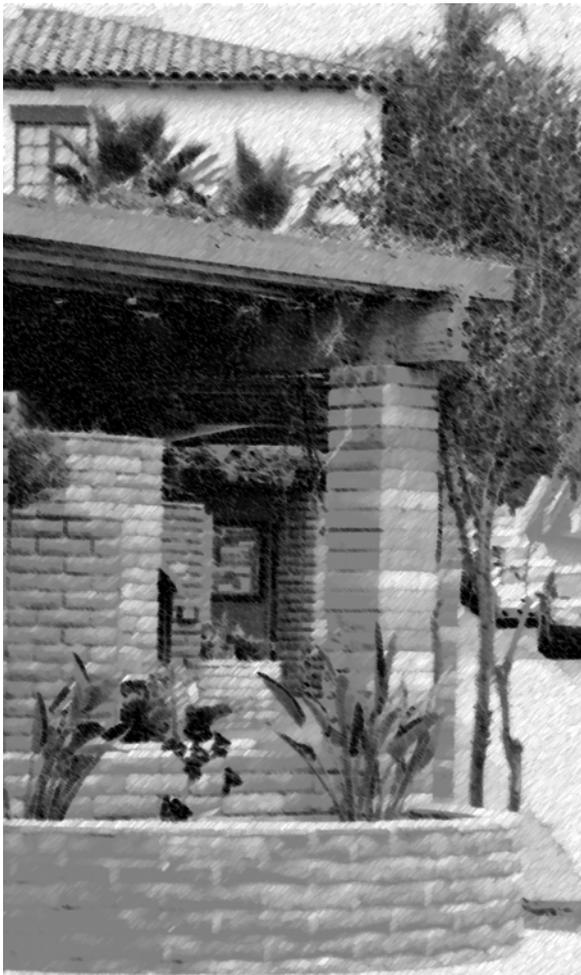
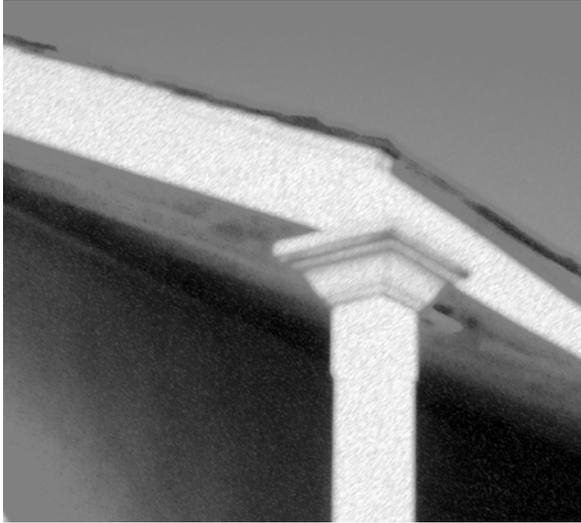
Porticos and arcades provide shelter and shade, and define a pedestrian zone along the street of one story height.



### Key features:

- Project from primary wall
- Substantial depth
- Supported on posts/columns

## POSTS & COLUMNS



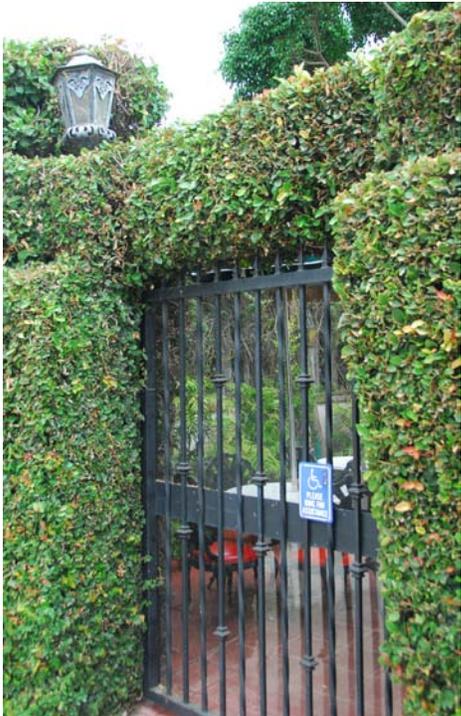
# PATIOS & COURTYARDS - SHELTERED



## PATIOS & COURTYARDS - OPEN TO SKY

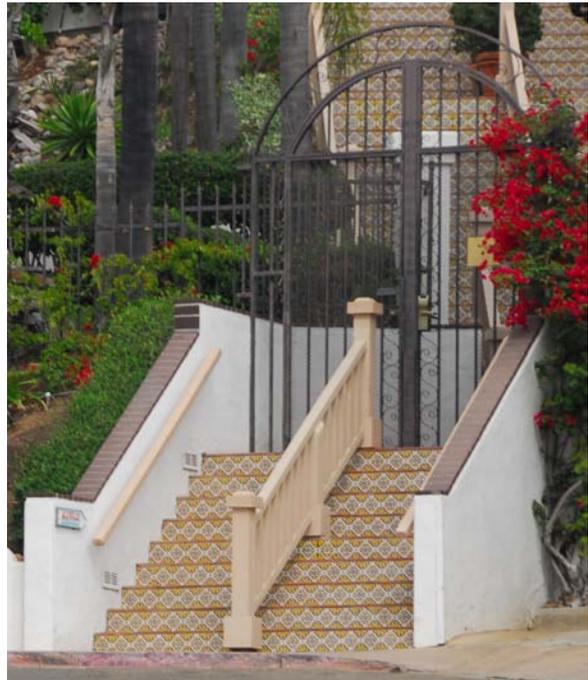


# COURTYARD GATEWAYS



- Key features:**
- Continues material of building or site wall
  - Substantial depth
  - Supported on posts/columns
  - Often roofed

## COURTYARD GATEWAYS



# LIGHTS



## LIGHTS



**Key features:**

- Wrought metal
- Supported on brackets
- Faceted enclosure



### Exteriors Stairs to Upper Floors

Exterior stairs provide visual interest, with a play of shadows, forms and textures.



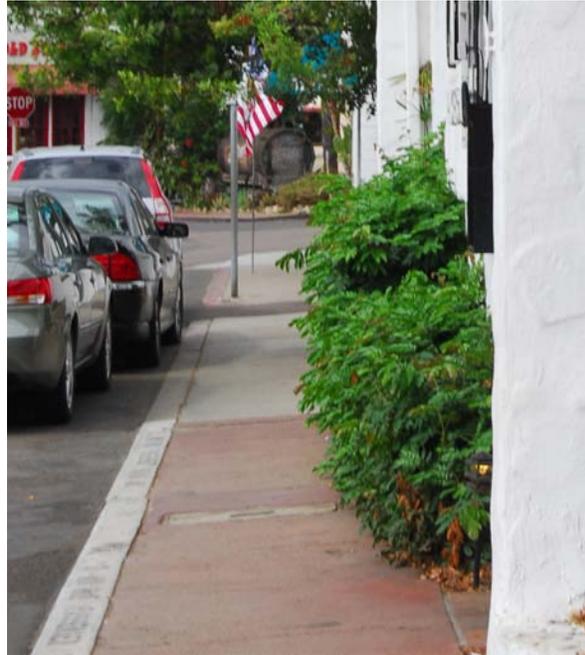
### Exterior Stairs to Second Floors

- Stepped form in hand rail/wall
- Covered landing
- Reduces perceived building scale
- Creates interesting shadows
- Conveys sense of scale
- Provides visual interest



## Paving

Decorative paving exists in a variety of patterns and materials. Changes in paving identify individual property lines, and demarcate individual courtyards and plazas.



## Decorative paving

- Provides visual interest
- Defines active use areas
- Defines walkways
- Varies from parcel to parcel
- Variety adds to sense of discovery in Old Town

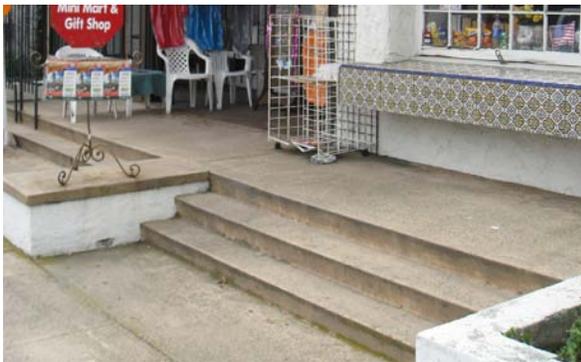


# Paving



## Exterior Stairs to Outdoor Spaces

Exterior stairways provide visual interest in their inherent forms, as well as in decorative details of tiles as well wrought iron rails and gates.



### Exterior Stairs

- Decorative tile as accent
- Wrought iron handrails & gates

# FENCES & WALLS



- Key features:**
- Simple primary material
  - Decorative tile as accent
  - Added detail at gateway
  - Varied materials

## Site Walls



**Key features:**

- Simple forms
- Varied textures

# Site Walls



## COMBINING DESIGN FEATURES IN SPECIFIC PERIODS

The design features described in the preceding pages often combine in different ways, to reflect the influence of the three historical themes of Old Town. These are the Spanish, Mexican, and American periods.

### SPANISH PERIOD (1769-1821)



#### Spanish Period Features:

##### FORMS

- Simple rectangular forms
- Towers as accents
- Tall floor heights
- Arches
- Masonry columns

##### BUILDING MATERIALS

- Thick bearing wall of adobe brick or stucco finish
- Hewn timbers

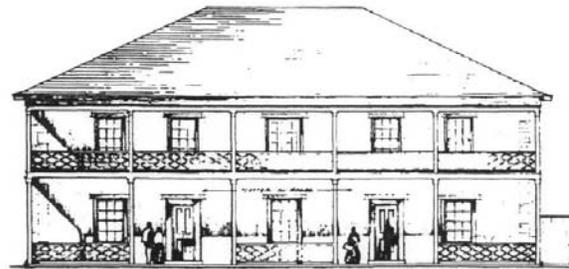
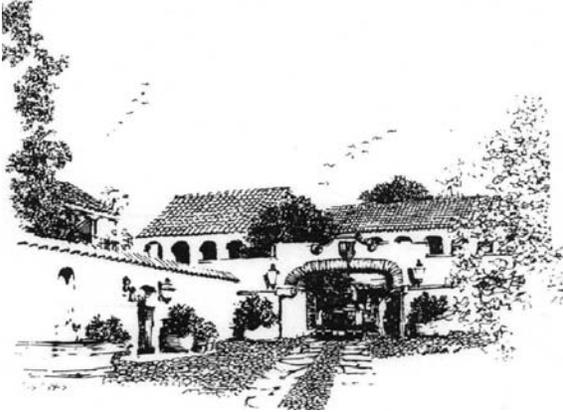
##### ROOF FORMS

- Wood shingle, tiled or sod roofs
- Low-pitched roof, shed, gable or hip, or
- Flat roof with parapet
- Offset roof heights

##### DETAILS

- Carved doors
- Carved stonework
- Limited surface decoration
- 
- Deep window and door openings
- Simple windows

## MEXICAN PERIOD (1821-1846)



ROSE ROBINSON BUILDING

### Mexican Period Features:

#### FORMS

- Simple rectangular forms
- Towers as accents
- Tall floor heights
- Arches & arcades
- Masonry columns
- Asymmetrical composition

#### BUILDING MATERIALS

- Thick bearing wall of adobe brick or stucco finish
- Hewn timbers

#### ROOF FORMS

- Wood shingle, tiled or sod roofs
- Low-pitched roof, shed, gable or hip, or
- Flat roof with parapet
- Offset roof heights

### DETAILS

- Carved doors
- Carved stonework
- Limited surface decoration
- Deep window and door openings
- Simple windows

More recent buildings constructed with this theme may be categorized as Mission Revival Style and Spanish Colonial Revival.

## AMERICAN PERIOD (1848-1873)



Buildings in this category include early Western False Fronts Commercial types.



### Key Features:

#### Forms:

##### Simple, rectangular box shape

- Balconies and porches
- Display windows
- Symmetrical composition

#### Wall planes:

- Simple form

#### Roofs:

- Gable
- Flat false front

#### Materials:

- Horizontal lap siding
- Brick
- 

#### Projecting features:

- Eaves
- Cornices
- Porches

