

Chapter 20.14 - DOWNTOWN ZONING DISTRICTS

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20.14.010 Purpose of the Downtown Zoning Districts

A. Downtown Core (D-COR). The purpose of the D-COR zoning district is to maintain and enhance a vibrant downtown core with a diversity of land uses. The D-COR zoning district supports downtown as a destination for arts, entertainment, retail, and dining uses, with housing that contributes to the vitality of the area. The design of development helps to create a pedestrian-friendly environment and an active public realm. A mixture of land uses and higher intensity development supports transportation options, including walking, bicycling, and use of transit.

B. Downtown Office (D-O). The purpose of the D-O zoning district is to accommodate a concentration of office uses that support a vibrant and dynamic downtown. The D-O zoning district accommodates a variety of land uses, including personal services in addition to office uses. In the D-O zoning district buildings are designed to support an active and inviting public realm. The D-O zoning district creates an attractive environment for businesses and employers that enhances the economic vitality of the community. The D-O zoning district also serves as a buffer between more intensive development in the D-COR zoning district and surrounding residential neighborhoods.



C. Downtown Commercial (D-CM). The purpose of the D-CM Zoning District is to encourage growth and investment in commercial areas adjacent to Merced's downtown core. New development in the D-CM zoning district will provide amenities for adjacent residential neighborhoods and enhance the appearance of gateways into downtown. Development supports a pedestrian-friendly environment with buildings located near the front sidewalk and parking located to the side or rear. A variety of land uses, including residential, commercial, and office, contribute to an active and inviting environment.

20.14.020 Land Use Regulations for Downtown Zoning Districts

A. Permitted Uses. Table 20.14-1 identifies land uses permitted in downtown zoning districts.

TABLE 20.14-1 PERMITTED LAND USES IN THE DOWNTOWN ZONING DISTRICTS

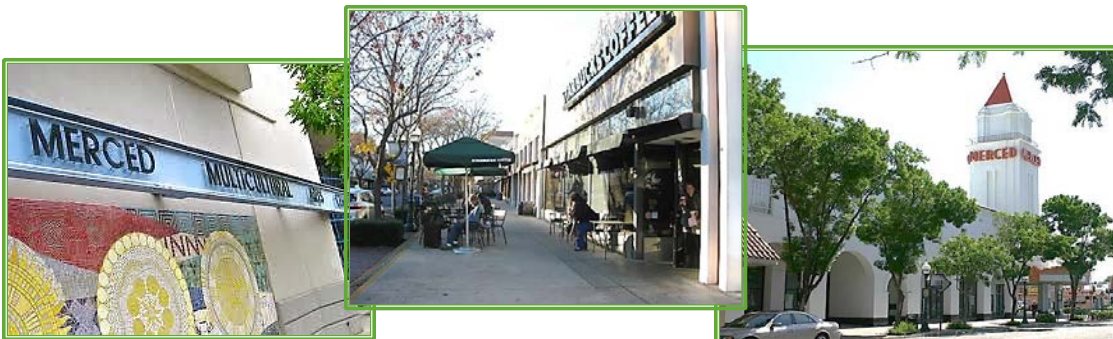
Key		Zoning District			
P Permitted Use	D-COR	D-O	D-CM ^[1]	Additional Regulations	
M Minor Use Permit Required					
SP Site Plan Review Permit Required					
C Conditional Use Permit Required					
X Use Not Allowed					
RESIDENTIAL USES					
Group/Transitional/Supportive Housing	P [3]	P [3]	SP		
Live/Work Units	P [2]	P [2]	P [2]	Sec. 20.44.080	
Multiple-Family Dwellings	P	P	SP		
Residential Care Facilities, Small (6 or fewer)	P [3]	P [3]	SP		
Residential Care Facilities, Large (More than 6)	C	C	C		
Single-Room Occupancy	P [3]	SP	SP	Sec. 20.44.120	
COMMUNITY USES					
Community Assembly	C	C	C		
Colleges and Trade Schools	P	P	C		
Community Gardens	SP	SP	SP		
Cultural Institutions	M	M	M		
Day Care Home Facilities, Small (8 children or less)	P	P	P		
Day Care Home Facilities, Large (9 to 14 children)	P	P	P		
Day Care Centers	M	M	M		
Government Offices	P	P	P		
Instructional Services	P	M	P		
Medical Offices and Clinics	P	P	P		
Parks and Recreational Facilities	P	P	P		
Public Safety Facilities	SP	SP	SP		
Rehabilitation Centers	X [4][5]	C [4][5]	C [4][5]		
Schools, Public or Private	C	C	C		
Social Assistance Services	C	SP	SP		

Key	Zoning District			
P Permitted Use	D-COR	D-O	D-CM ^[1]	Additional Regulations
M Minor Use Permit Required				
SP Site Plan Review Permit Required				
C Conditional Use Permit Required				
X Use Not Allowed				
COMMERCIAL USES				
Bail Bond Businesses	X [4]	C [4]	C [4]	
Banks, Retail	P	P	P	
Bars and Nightclubs	C	X	C	
Bed and Breakfast	C	C	C	Sec. 20.44.030
Billiard Parlor or Pool Hall (6 or more tables)	C	X	C	
Business Support Services	SP	M	M	
Check Cashing/Payday Loan Establishments	X [4]	C	C	Sec. 20.44.040
Commercial Recreation, Indoor	P	X	P	
Drive-Through and Drive-Up Sales	X	X	C	
Funeral Parlors and Mortuaries	C	C	C	
Gas and Service Stations	C	X	C	Sec. 20.44.070
Hookah Lounges	C	X	C	
Hotels and Motels	P	C	P	
Maintenance and Repair Services	C	X	C	
Mobile Food Vendors	X	C	C	
Office, Professional	P	P	P	
Pawn Shops	X[4]	X	C	
Personal Services	P	M	P	
Restaurant	P	SP	P	
Retail, General	P	C	P	
Retail, with Alcohol Sales (If Less than 20,000 Square Feet in Building Size)	C	X	C	Sec. 20.44.010
Retail, with Alcohol Sales (More than 20,000 Square Feet in Building Size)	P	X	P	Sec. 20.44.010
Skateboard Stores	X [4]	X	P [4]	
Tattoo Parlors	C	M	M	
Vehicle Rentals	M	X	C	
Vehicle Sales	C [6]	X	C	

Key		Zoning District			
P Permitted Use	D-COR	D-O	D-CM ^[1]	Additional Regulations	
M Minor Use Permit Required					
SP Site Plan Review Permit Required					
C Conditional Use Permit Required					
X Use Not Allowed					
INDUSTRIAL USES					
Research and Development	C	SP	C		
TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATION, AND UTILITY USES					
Recycling Facilities				Sec. 20.44.090	
Reverse Vending Machines	P	P	P		
Small Collection Facilities	X	X	M		
Large Collection Facilities	X	X	C		
Transportation Terminals	C	X	C		
Parking Facilities	SP	SP	SP		
Utilities, Major	C	C	C		
Utilities, Minor	P	P	P		
Wireless Communication Facilities	See Chapter 20.58				

Notes:

- [1] A Site Plan Review Permit may be required per Chapter 20.32 (Interface Regulations) regardless of the uses shown in Table 20.14-1.
- [2] Residential use on the ground floor is prohibited unless it is located on the back of the property where it is not visible or approved with a Conditional Use Permit.
- [3] Prohibited as a single use unless approved with a Conditional Use Permit. Permitted as part of a residential mixed-use project.
- [4] Prohibited in the City Center area between 19th and 16th Streets and O Street and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, including properties fronting on either side of each of the above streets.
- [5] Rehabilitation centers for drug, methadone, and alcohol are prohibited.
- [6] A Conditional Use Permit is required for new and used vehicle sales but only in small showrooms, not large parking lots.



20.14.030 Development Standards for Downtown Zoning Districts

- A. Parcel Dimensions and Intensity.** Table 20.14-2 identifies required parcel dimensions and maximum development intensity standards in the downtown zoning districts.

TABLE 20.14-2 PARCEL AND INTENSITY STANDARDS IN DOWNTOWN ZONING DISTRICTS

	Standard by Zone		
	D-COR	D-O	D-CM
Parcel Area (min.)	1,250 sq. ft.		
Parcel Width (min.)	25 ft.		
Parcel Depth (min.)	50 ft.		
Residential Density (max.)	36 du/acre	36 du/acre	36 du/acre

B. Building Form and Placement.

1. **Basic Standards.** Table 20.14-3 identifies building form and placement standards in the downtown zoning districts. See Figure 20.14-1.

TABLE 20.14-3 BUILDING FORM AND PLACEMENT STANDARDS IN DOWNTOWN ZONING DISTRICTS

	Figure Label	Standard by Zone		
		D-COR	D-O	D-CM
SETBACKS				
Exterior [1] [A	Min: 0 ft. Max: 10 ft.	Min: 0 ft. Max: 10 ft.	Min: 0 ft. Max: 10 ft.
Interior Rear	B	0 ft. [1]	0 ft. [1]	0 ft. [1]
Interior Side	C	0 ft. [2]	0 ft. [2]	0 ft. [2]
Height (max.) [3]	D	None	60 ft.[3]	60 ft.[3]
STEPBACKS (MIN.)				
Exterior, above 6 stories	E	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.
Interior, above 2nd floor when adjacent to single-family home	F	15 ft.	15 ft.	15 ft.

Notes:

[1] 10 ft. min. from property line adjacent to a single-family home.

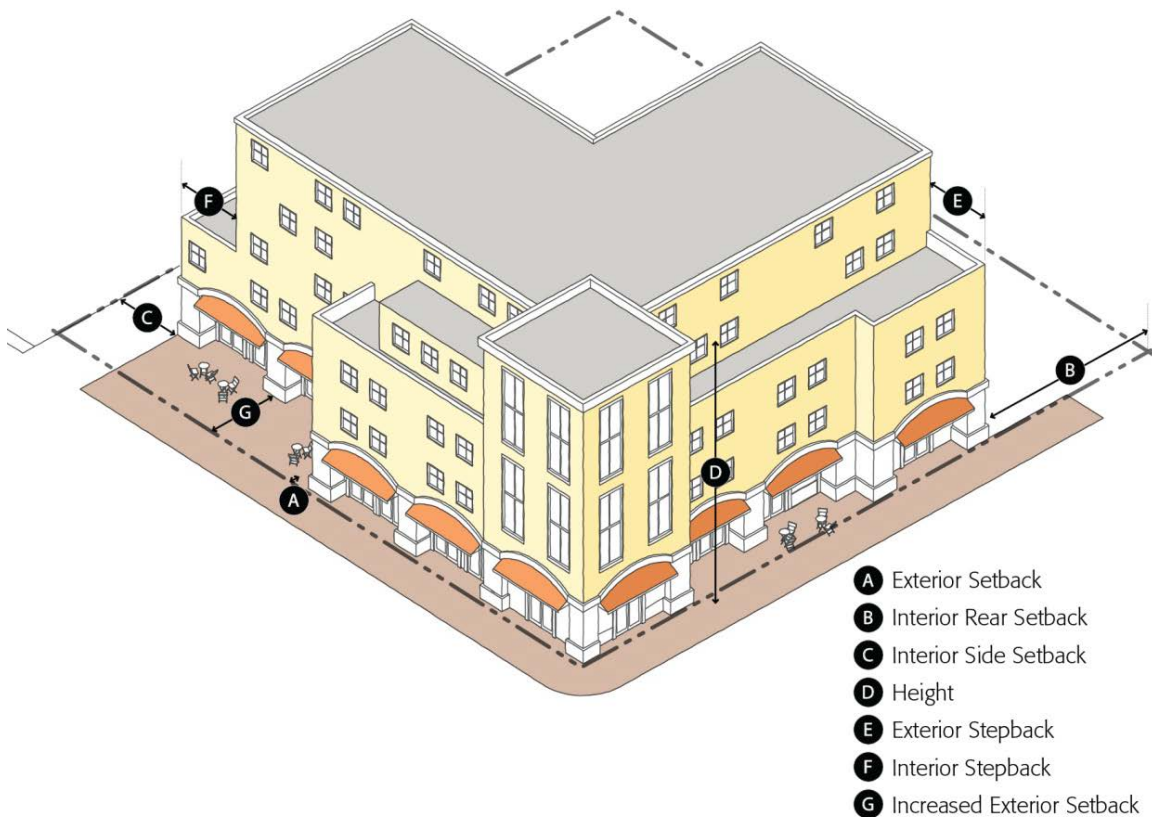
[2] 15 ft. min. from property line adjacent to a single-family home.

[3] Height limits only apply where directly adjacent to residential zones and in those cases, exceptions to the height limitations may be granted by the Site Plan Review Committee.

2. **Increased Exterior Setbacks.** In exception to Table 20.14-3 above, a maximum of 40 percent of the building frontage may be set back up to 25 feet from an exterior property line to provide a space for public and semi-public amenities such courtyards or outdoor seating areas with the approval of a Minor Use Permit. See **G** in Figure 20.14-1.

FIGURE 20.14-1

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS



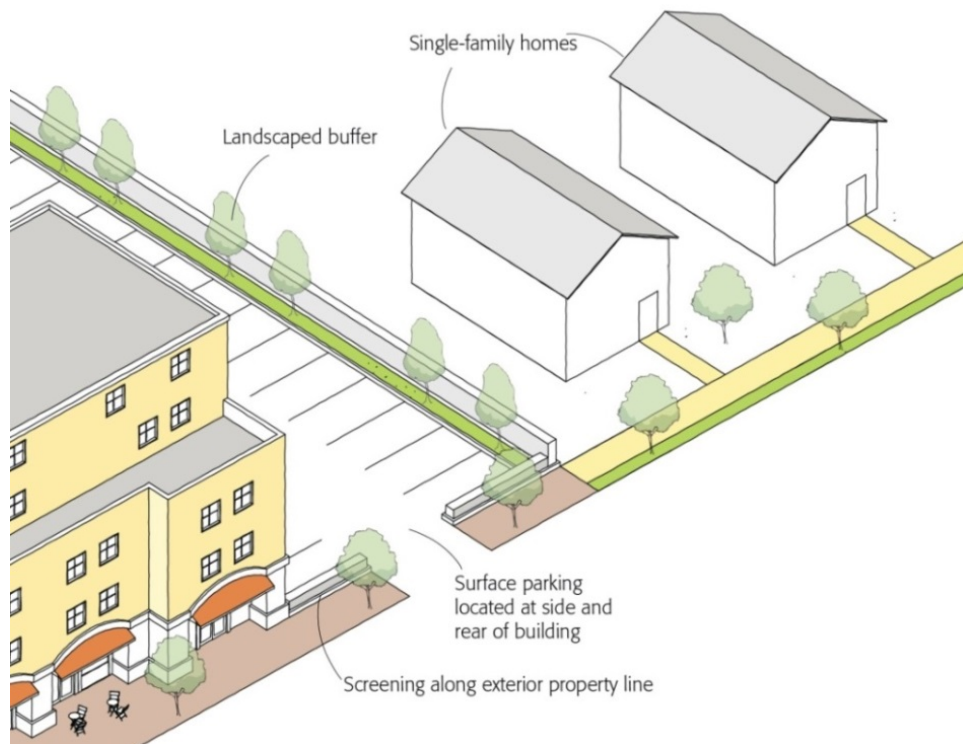
- C. Parking (Only applies in D-COR zone).** Exceptions to the following standards (C1, C2, C3, & C4) may be granted by the Director of Development Services through the issuance of a Minor Use Permit.

1. **Location.**

- a. Surface parking shall be located only to the rear or side of buildings, unless approved with a Minor Use Permit. See Figure 20.14-2. Surface parking is only allowed towards the back of the building with access on alleys and screening, which would block visibility of a surface parking lot from the exterior streets, unless otherwise approved with a Minor Use Permit.
- b. Parking completely or partially underground may match the setbacks of the main building, but shall be screened from view.

2. **New Driveways.** For parcels served by a rear alley, new driveways for vehicular access shall be off the alley only. New driveways off the front or side of the parcel may be approved with a Minor Use Permit. To approve the Minor Use Permit, the Director of Development Services must make the following findings:
- The driveway is necessary to provide vehicle access to the property.
 - The design and placement of the new driveway minimizes impacts on pedestrians to the greatest extent possible.

FIGURE 20.14-2 DOWNTOWN PARKING LOCATION AND BUFFERS



3. **Buffers and Screening.**
- Surface parking located adjacent to an exterior property line shall be screened along the public right-of-way with a decorative wall, hedge, trellis, or landscaping at least 3 feet in height. See Figure 20.14-2.
 - A landscaped buffer at least 3 feet wide and 6 feet tall shall be located for any surface parking adjacent to a single-family home. See Figure 20.14-2.

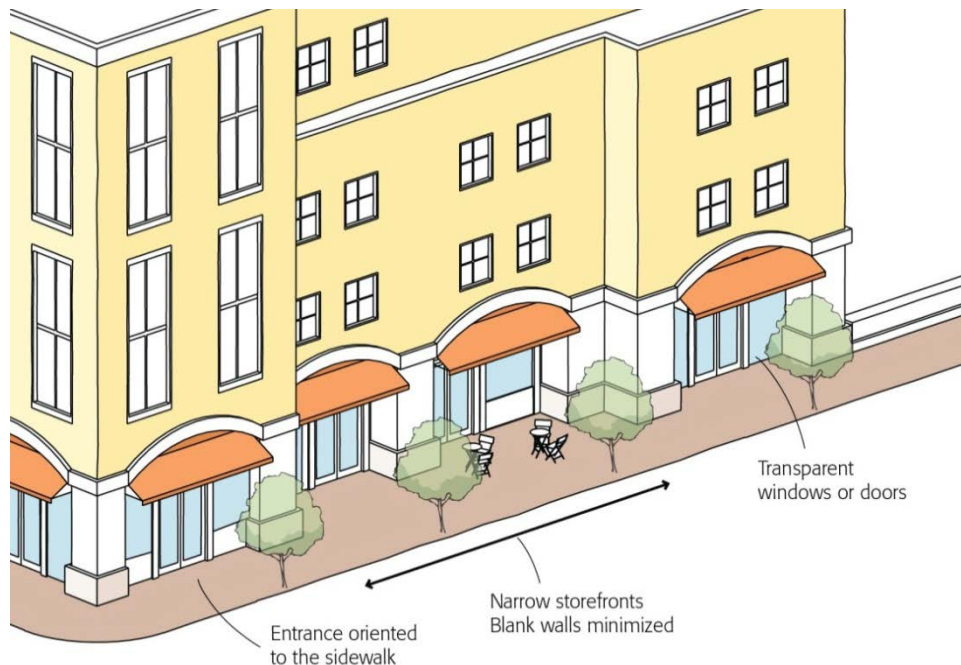
4. Parking Structure Design.

- a. All exterior walls of parking structures shall feature materials that maintain a common architectural character with the structure served by the parking structure.
- b. Parking structure facades shall be broken-up through the use of textured concrete on exterior walls, the incorporation of planters and trellises at each parking level, and other architectural treatments to minimize large blank walls without architectural relief.
- c. Parked vehicles at each level within the structure shall be shielded from view from adjoining streets through the use of architectural appurtenances and landscaping.

D. Street-Level Building Design (Only applies in the D-COR zone). Exceptions to the following standards (D1, D2, D3, & D4) may be granted by the Director of Development Services through the issuance of a Minor Use Permit.

1. **Building Orientation.** Buildings shall be oriented towards a public street with the primary entrance to the site or building directly accessible from an adjacent sidewalk. The Director of Development Services may allow buildings and their primary entrances to be oriented toward a public space. The primary entrance to a building shall not be oriented towards surface parking. See Figure 20.14-3.

FIGURE 20.14-3 BUILDING ORIENTATION



2. **Blank Walls.** The maximum length of an unarticulated/blank building wall shall be 10 feet in the D-COR zoning district, and 25 feet for all other Downtown zoning districts, unless otherwise approved with a Minor Use Permit. Architectural articulation shall have similar pattern as other adjacent buildings to provide cohesive design in the neighborhood. See **H** in Figure 20.14-4. Building articulation may be provided by:
- Doors, windows, and other building openings;
 - Building projections or recesses, doorway and window trim, artwork displays, and other details that provide architectural articulation and design interest;
 - Varying wall planes, heights or contrasting materials and colors; and,
 - Awnings, canopies, or arcades to reinforce the pedestrian scale and provide shade and cover from the elements.

FIGURE 20.14-4 DOWNTOWN BLANK WALL AND STOREFRONT WIDTH

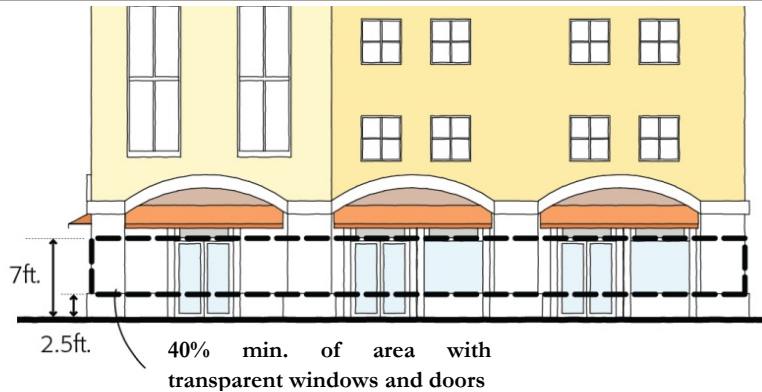


3. **Storefront Width.** The maximum building/storefront width in the D-COR zoning district shall be 50 feet and 100 feet in all other Downtown zoning districts, unless otherwise approved through a Minor Use Permit. Larger buildings shall be broken down into a pedestrian-scale rhythm with individual building bay width of 25 to 50 feet. See **I** in Figure 20.14-4.

4. Ground Floor Building Transparency.

- a. The ground floor street-facing building walls of non-residential uses shall provide transparent windows or doors with views into the building for a minimum of 40 percent of the building frontage located between 2½ and 7 feet above the sidewalk. 50 percent of the transparent windows or doors area shall remain clear to allow views into the building. See Figure 20.14-5.

FIGURE 20.14-5 DOWNTOWN GROUND FLOOR BUILDING TRANSPARENCY



- b. Exceptions to this transparency requirement may be allowed with a Minor Use Permit if the Director of Development Services finds that:

- (1) The proposed use has unique operational characteristics which preclude building openings, such as for a cinema or theater; and,
- (2) Street-facing building walls will exhibit architectural relief and detail, and will be enhanced with landscaping or artwork in such a way as to create visual interest at the pedestrian level.

