



# 20<sup>th</sup> and N Streets

Historic District Plan



## 20<sup>th</sup> And N Streets Historic District Plan

### Physical Description and Boundaries

The 20<sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District is situated in the middle of Sacramento's original 1848 street grid and features a distinctive collection of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings. As its name suggests, the district's parcels are oriented around the intersection of 20<sup>th</sup> and N streets. The boundary of the district loosely parallels 21<sup>st</sup> Street to the east, Matsui Alley to the north, the Western Pacific Railroad to the west, and Neighbors Alley to the south.



Figure 10. A Classic Box house beside the former Western Pacific Railroad tracks that form the historic district's western boundary.



Figure 11. Rows of palms line sections of N Street.



Figure 12. Decorative woodwork adorns a Queen Anne style house in the historic district.



Figure 13. Victorian-era houses on 20<sup>th</sup> Street.

## Brief Historic Context

The 20<sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District preserves a small cluster of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings located between the East End Historic District and Winn Park Historic District. The district's core buildings were erected over an approximately twenty-two-year period, between 1888 and 1910. Until the final decades of the nineteenth century, the area in question was situated at the eastern edge of the most developed parts of the city, far removed from the dense residential and commercial areas that marked Sacramento's crowded West End. By 1895, the area surrounding 20<sup>th</sup> and N streets was densely populated with residents and businesses.<sup>1</sup>

The growth of this section of the city can be attributed to the completion of streetcar lines that connected the Old City of Sacramento to the soon-to-be neighborhoods of Midtown and the East End, so named because of its location east of the Capitol. The electrified routes along M and P streets, which both began their operations during the early 1890s, and the subsequent streetcar extensions along 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> streets, provided convenient transportation access to the area.<sup>2</sup> Aside from a few homes that were constructed during the late 1880s, such as that of 1320 20<sup>th</sup> Street, the residences of the 20<sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District were built during the 1890s and the first years of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> This pattern of development aligns with trends nationwide as residents in cities across the country migrated from dense urban centers to streetcar suburbs that emerged along streetcar around the turn of the

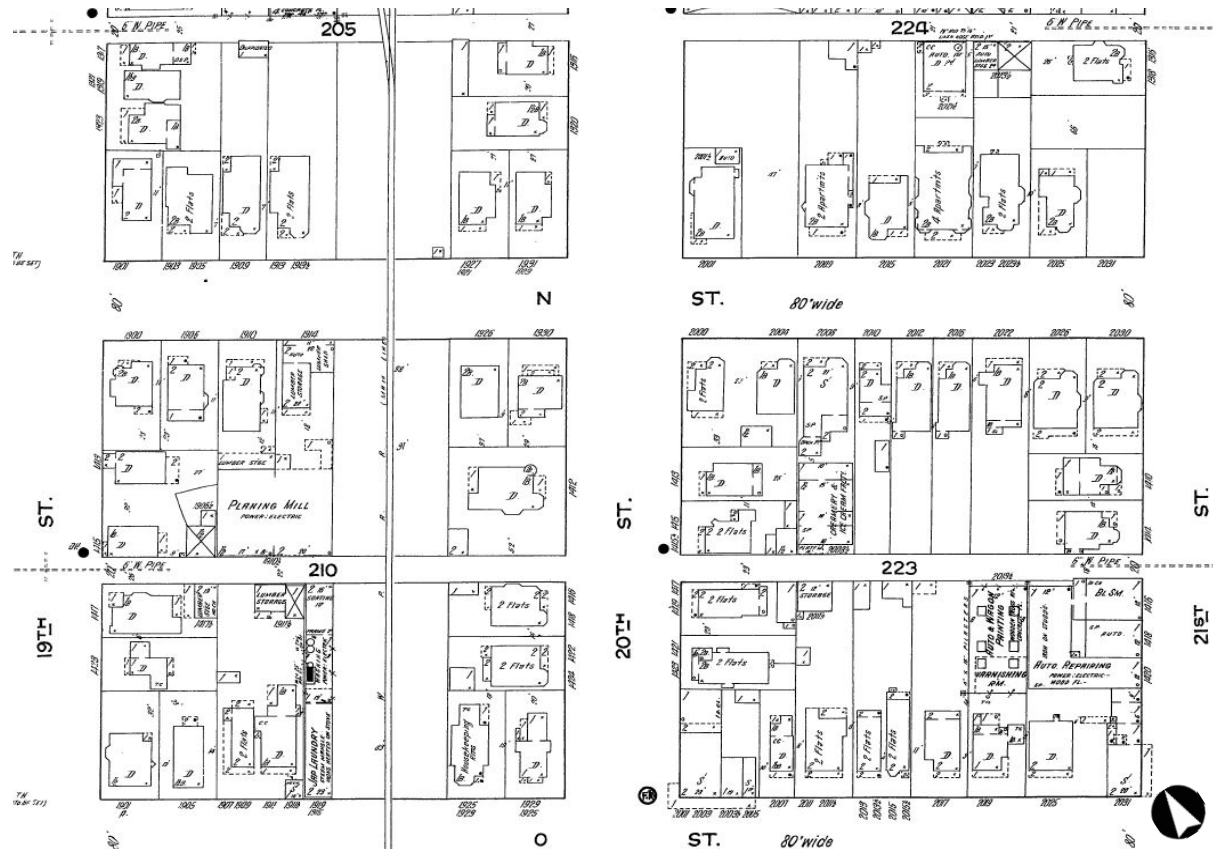


Figure 14. Portion of a map published by the Sanborn Map Company in 1915, showing the intersection of 20<sup>th</sup> and N streets (1915). Source: Sacramento Public Library, edited by Page & Turnbull.

century.<sup>4</sup>

The neighborhood changed dramatically with the introduction of the Western Pacific Railroad. In 1907,

the railroad company was granted the right to build a second set of transcontinental railroad tracks through the city on an 80-foot right-of-way between 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> streets, the present western boundary of the district. Freight service began on the new rail line in

1 Sanborn Map Company, Sacramento, California [map], 1895.

2 William Burg, *Midtown Sacramento: Creative Soul of the City* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2014), 36

3 Sanborn Map Company, Sacramento, California [map], 1915.

4 Linda Flint McClelland, *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form: Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States, 1830-1960*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2002.

1909, and passenger service followed a year later.<sup>5</sup>

The properties near the intersection of 20<sup>th</sup> and N streets attracted working-class individuals and families, particularly after the arrival of the railroad. Though most of the homes within the district began as single-family dwellings, many were converted into apartments by 1915.<sup>6</sup> Listings in the *Sacramento Union* advertised numerous furnished flats and housekeeping rooms, accommodations that often served single men and women employed in low-wage industries.<sup>7</sup> The ads touted the wholesome character of the neighborhood and its proximity to streetcars.<sup>8</sup>

With the multitude of transportation channels servicing the vicinity of the district, commercial ventures emerged alongside residences at the turn of the century. One such enterprise was that of Clarence M. Griffeth's ice cream and butter factory, formerly located at 2008 N Street. Clarence, the son of prominent M Street grocer Melbourne B. Griffeth, began his business in 1910. By 1911, he had established a manufacturing facility at the rear of 2008 N Street.<sup>9</sup> The creamery went out of business just five years later, but the district's current assortment of mixed-use residential and retail establishments preserves its

character as a node of localized commercial activity.<sup>10</sup>

The twentieth-century trajectory of the 20<sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District remained closely linked with transportation. In 1913, the Lincoln Highway, one of the first cross-country roads in the country, was completed and included a route through Sacramento that ran down 12<sup>th</sup> Street and then along 15<sup>th</sup> Street before turning east along M Street, less than a block from the northern boundary of the district.<sup>11</sup>

Subsequent to the highway and other street improvement projects, automobile garages replaced carriage barns along the alleys within the districts.<sup>12</sup> As automobile ownership increased, many residents who could afford to do so relocated to residential suburbs outside of the outskirts of city. The demand for streetcars gradually declined and by 1947 all routes throughout Sacramento had ended.<sup>13</sup>

5 William Burg, *Sacramento's K Street: Where Our City Was Born* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), 62-64.

6 Sanborn Map Company, 1915.

7 Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 125-126.

8 "To Let—Rooms Furnished," *Sacramento Union*, May 7, 1913, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SU19130507.2.265.6&srpos=3&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-%221412+20th+Street%22+Sacramento-----1>.

9 William Ladd Willis, *History of Sacramento County, California, with Biographical Sketches of the Leading Men and Women of the County Who Have Been Identified With Its Growth and Development From the Early Days to Present*, (Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1913), 664, <https://archive.org/details/historyofsacrame00will>.

10 "Bankrupt Sale: Groceries and Fixtures," *Sacramento Union*, August 4, 1916, <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SU19160804.2.87.3&srpos=1&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-Sacramento+%222008+N+Street%22-----1>.

11 Lincoln Highway Association Map Committee, "Official Map of the Lincoln Highway," accessed August 27, 2018, <https://www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org/map/>.

12 Sanborn Map Company, 1915.

13 William Burg, *Sacramento's Streetcars* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 8.

## Significance

The 20<sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District was designated for listing on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources by the City Preservation Commission in 1985 in Ordinance #85-076.

The following table provides a current evaluation of significance under the requirements and considers the factors based on the above historic district context and the 2018 historic district survey. Additionally, this historic district relates to the Railroad Context Statement of the city’s General Plan Technical Background Report.

<b>(B) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts</b>	
<b>(1) Requirements</b>	
(a)	The 20 <sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District meets requirement (a) for listing on the Sacramento Register, because it is a geographically definable area.
(b)(i)	<p>The 20<sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District meets requirement (b)(i) for listing on the Sacramento Register as an area that possesses “a significant concentration or continuity of buildings unified by: (A) past events or (B) aesthetically by plan or physical development.”</p> <p>The 20<sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District consists of modest-scale Victorian-era buildings situated around the intersection of 20<sup>th</sup> and N streets. The predominant architectural styles are Queen Anne and Classic Box. The Classic Box was a particularly common building type that was constructed along streetcar lines at the turn of the century.<sup>14</sup> Though many of the buildings have been altered, they share a similar massing, setback, Delta-style high basements, and gabled or hipped roofs.</p>
(b)(ii)	<p>The 20<sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District meets requirement (b)(ii) for listing on the Sacramento Register as an area “associated with an event, person, or period significant or important to city history.”</p> <p>The 20<sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District is associated with the settlement of Sacramento’s Midtown and East End as part of the city’s gradual expansion to the east and south at the end of the nineteenth century. This pattern of development aligns with a wider national trend of individuals and families migrating out of dense urban areas to newer streetcar suburbs around the turn of the century. Similarly, the creation of extensive streetcar networks in Sacramento during this period allowed residents to move away from older neighborhoods in the city’s increasingly overcrowded and unhealthy West End to undeveloped areas on the city’s periphery. Near the intersection of 20<sup>th</sup> and N streets, the introduction of streetcar lines on M, P, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> streets brought new residents to the area, transforming it into a vibrant mix of residences and neighborhood commercial businesses.</p>
(c)	The 20 <sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District meets requirement (c) for listing on the Sacramento Register as it aligns with the goals and purposes of historic preservation in Sacramento, as well as the city’s other goals and policies. Per the Sacramento City Code, the preservation of the district enhances the “city’s economic, cultural and aesthetic standing, its identity and its livability, marketability, and urban character.”

<sup>14</sup> Susan Cerny, “Rows of early 20th century homes line early streetcar lines,” *The Berkeley Daily Planet* (Berkeley, CA), November 2, 2002, <http://www.berkeleydailyplanet.com/issue/2002-11-02/article/15862?headline=Rows-of-early-20th-century-homes-line-early-streetcar-lines--By-Susan-Cerny->



## Period of Significance: 1888-1910

The period of significance for the 20<sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District begins with the construction of the first residence within the district in 1888 and concludes with the start of passenger service on the Western Pacific Railroad in 1910. The introduction of the railroad dramatically altered the setting and character of the district, which was originally a continuation of the residential neighborhoods to the west of the tracks.

## Property Types from the Period of Significance

- Residential
- Commercial

## Architectural Styles from the Period of Significance

- Italianate
- Queen Anne
- Folk Victorian
- Colonial Revival
- Classic Box
- Classical Revival
- Prairie

### (B) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts

#### (2) Factors to be considered

(a)	Factor (2)(a) states that “a historic district should have integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship and association.” The 20 <sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District retains sufficient integrity to meet this factor for consideration as a historic district.
(b)	Factor (2)(b) states that “the collective historic value of the buildings and structures in a historic district taken together may be greater than the historic value of each individual building or structure.” The 20 <sup>th</sup> and N Streets Historic District meets this factor because its buildings and structures represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose collective historic value is greater when taken as a whole.

## Character-Defining Features

Element	Character of Historic District
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historically single-family residences, some converted into multi-family units</li> <li>Parking and auxiliary uses located along alleys</li> </ul>
Mass & Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buildings primarily one to two stories tall</li> <li>Some houses with Delta-style high basements and raised first story</li> <li>High concentration of Classic Box-form houses</li> </ul>
Cladding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predominately wood siding, three lap, channel rustic, or shingle siding</li> </ul>
Roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Front-facing gabled, cross-gabled, and hipped roofs, often with centrally-placed dormers</li> </ul>
Entries & Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delta-style configuration with staircases leading to primary entrances above a high basement</li> <li>Central or offset front doors with little ornamentation</li> <li>Brick stairs</li> </ul>
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wood-frame double-hung windows</li> <li>Single- and multi-story bay windows present on many Victorian-era homes</li> </ul>
Porches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prominent full- or half-width porches accessed by a staircase</li> </ul>
Ornamentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decorative shingles on gabled ends</li> <li>Classical Revival details, including fluted pilasters, columns, dentils, and pedimented porticoes</li> </ul>
Property Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistently large setback on lettered streets, measuring approximately 40 feet from the street curb</li> <li>Inconsistent, but generally narrower setback on numbered streets</li> <li>Shallow front yards, some gated with metal fences that incorporate original brick piers</li> <li>Some brick patios and walkways</li> </ul>
Streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hitching posts and evidence of removed hitching posts in the form of L-shaped concrete strips next to street curb, particularly on 20th Street</li> <li>A mix of deciduous and palm trees planted in grassy parking strips lining the street front</li> <li>Varying sidewalk widths to accommodate street trees</li> </ul>

## Boundaries & Location

The following map shows the boundaries and location of the 20th and N Streets Historic District.

To view the statuses of individual properties as contributing or non-contributing resources to the historic district, refer to the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources.

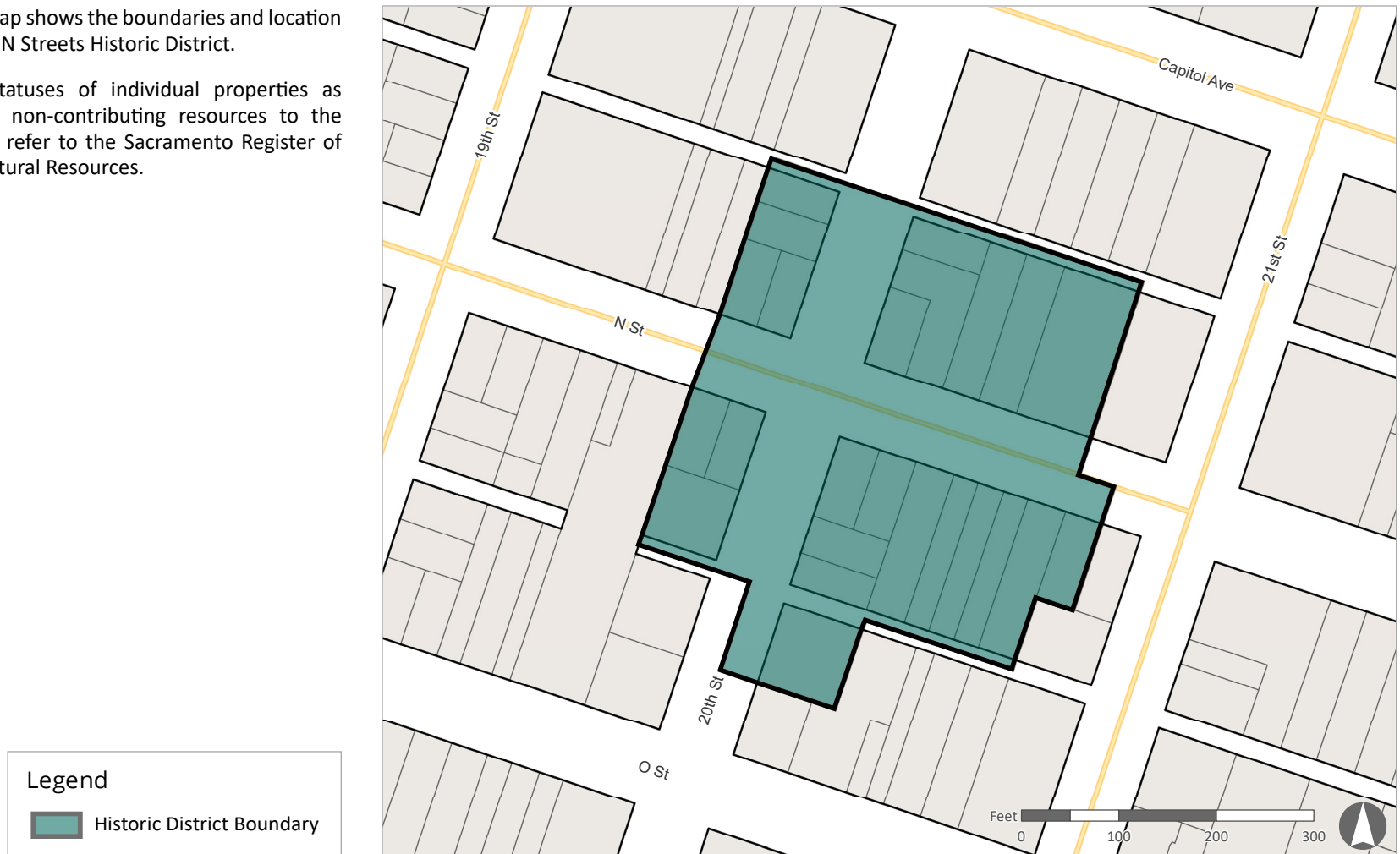


Figure 15. Map of the 20<sup>th</sup> & N Streets Historic District. Source: City of Sacramento and Page & Turnbull, 2019.



## District-Specific Standards & Criteria

### Design Principle

*Protect the integrity of contributing properties in the district by respecting their historic fabric and the character-defining features of the historic district.*

### Rationale

The 20th and N Streets Historic District contains a grouping of historic single-family residences, a number of which have been converted for commercial use. Many of the buildings have been physically altered, but collectively the character-defining features, including setback and landscaping, remain intact so that the character of the historic district is preserved.

In addition to the Standards & Criteria Common to Sacramento's Historic Districts in Section 1, the following district-specific standards and criteria apply when planning a project in the 20th and N Streets Historic District.

### 1. Rehabilitation of Contributing Resources

- 1.1 Avoid alterations that result in the removal, relocation, or reconfiguration of bay windows and rooftop dormers.

### 2. Additions & Accessory Structures for Contributing Resources

- 2.1 Design additions with proportions that maintain the characteristic massing of contributing Classic Box style buildings and vertical massing of Victorian-era buildings.
- 2.2 Avoid additions that cause a contributing building's height to exceed 150% of its historic height.
  - Use step backs to maintain the existing street façade height.



Figure 16. Alterations, additions, and infill should respect the characteristic massing of contributing buildings built in the Classic Box form.

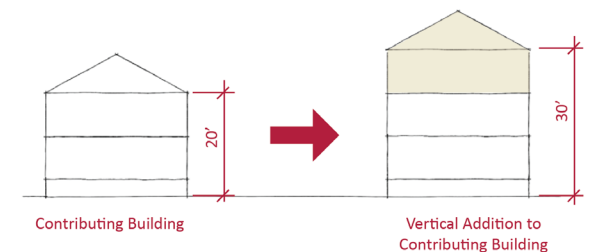


Figure 17. Additions should not cause a building's height to exceed 150% of its historic height.

### 3. New (Infill) Construction & Alterations to Non-Contributing Resources

- 3.1 Design the scale, massing, and proportions of new construction to be compatible with those of adjacent contributing buildings, which are predominately box shape or narrow and vertically massed.
- Where additional height is considered, the height of new buildings should be no more than 150% of the height of surrounding contributing buildings.
  - Consider using step backs for taller buildings to maintain the existing street façade height of adjacent contributing buildings.

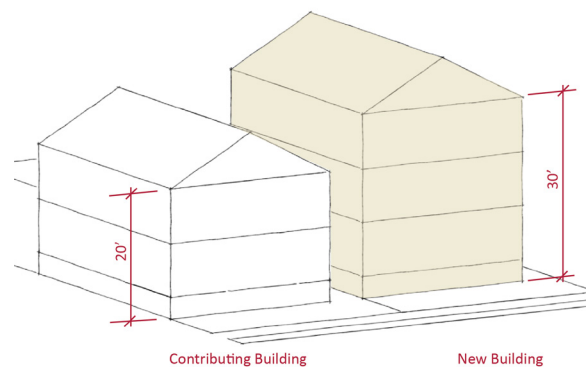


Figure 18. The height of new buildings should be no more than 150% of the height of surrounding contributing buildings.

- 3.2 Maintain the pattern of deep front setbacks on N Street and shallower setbacks along 20th Street.
- 3.3 Preserve the historic pattern and articulation of long, narrow 40' x 160' parcels, wherever possible.
- Consider breaking down the massing of large infill developments into smaller masses that reflect the historic lot pattern.



Figure 19. The new office building does not have an appropriate site setback from the historic building.

### 4. Site Features, Streetscape, & Landscaping

- 4.1 Where street trees consist of a row of trees of the same species, such as palms, replace removed or diseased trees in kind with the same species or a compatible species at regular intervals in order to maintain the historic tree planting pattern.
- 4.2 Preserve and maintain historic hitching posts and carriage barns in their original locations.
- 4.3 Avoid creating new curb cuts along N Street.
- Locate parking and service access along alleys, and use landscaping features to screen it from the public right-of-way, wherever possible.



Figure 20. Rows of trees along 20th Street.

## 5. Alley Infill

- 5.1 On a typical unsplit parcel, set back alley infill buildings a minimum of 30 feet from the primary building on the parcel. If a parcel is split, set back alley infill buildings a minimum of 15 feet from the lot split.
- 5.2 Aim to locate alley infill so that it is a minimum of 10 feet from contributing buildings on adjacent parcels.
- 5.3 The height of alley infill should be no more than 150% of the height of surrounding contributing buildings.

