



# Boulevard Park

Historic District Plan

## Physical Description & Boundaries

The Boulevard Park Historic District is a residential neighborhood located within Sacramento's original 1848 street grid. It consists of approximately 20 blocks located generally between B Street and Improv Alley on the north and south and between 20<sup>th</sup> Street and halfway between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> streets on the east and west. At Government Alley, the district extends east for two blocks to 25<sup>th</sup> Street before turning south across H and I streets to rejoin Improv Alley.

The district is situated around 21st and 22nd streets, two wide streets down the middle of which run a series of landscaped medians that give the neighborhood its name. These streets terminate at the one-block Grant Park at the district's northern border. Mature trees and grassy parking strips line the streets throughout the neighborhood, and three small "alley parks" are located behind the houses between 21st, 22nd, F, and H streets, giving the neighborhood a park-like atmosphere.



Figure 55. Landscaped medians are part of the characteristic streetscape of 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets.



Figure 56. The alley parks that were part of the Wright and Kimbrough planned subdivision survive on three blocks behind the houses on 21<sup>st</sup> Street between G and H streets.



Figure 57. Many of the largest houses in the district are located on street corners, such as this house on 22nd and F streets.



Figure 58. A grouping of modestly-sized houses on 21<sup>st</sup> Street between D and E streets in the northern section of the district.

## Brief Historic Context

Development of the blocks that became Boulevard Park began with the State Agricultural Society's decision to make Sacramento the permanent home of the State Fair in 1861. At that time, a plot of land – bounded by E, H, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets – was set aside as the location for the State Fair's fairgrounds. The fairgrounds included a racetrack and stock grounds and were quickly expanded in 1862 to include an additional six blocks between B, E, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets. A new horse-drawn streetcar line was constructed in 1871 to improve access to the fairgrounds, which brought visitors from the Central Pacific passenger depot downtown to the fairgrounds on H Street.<sup>1</sup>

The start of streetcar service down H Street spurred Sacramento's eastward expansion. Residential development up until this period had been primarily concentrated in the central business district downtown, where the commercial waterfront, railyards, industries, and state government offices were located. The availability of employment opportunities attracted large numbers of people to the downtown area who not only worked in the businesses downtown but often lived in the immediate area. The introduction of streetcars in the late nineteenth century shifted residential development to outlying areas of the city.<sup>22</sup> New residences and businesses, including some of the most prominent homes in Sacramento, sprang up along the streetcar line on H Street. The emergence of residential suburbs to the east of downtown accelerated with the electrification

1 William Burg, "Boulevard Park" (National Register of Historic Places Draft Registration Form, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2011), 8.2.

2 GEI Consultants, Inc., "Mid-Century Modern in the City of Sacramento Historic Context Statement and Survey Results" (report, City of Sacramento Community Development Department, 2011), 2.1.



Figure 59. Many Victorian-era houses line the former streetcar route on H Street.



Figure 60. Small Craftsman bungalows, such as these houses on D and 23<sup>rd</sup> streets, are characteristic on blocks to the east of Wright and Kimbrough's Boulevard Park subdivision and the National Register district's boundaries.



Figure 61. Scenes from the racetrack at Agricultural Park, later the site of Boulevard Park (1894). Source: Center for Sacramento History, 1985/152/272.

of the city's streetcar system in 1890.<sup>33</sup>

In 1905, the State Fair moved to newer, larger fairgrounds southwest of the city, and the old fairgrounds were sold to the Park Realty Company. The fair's relocation left behind an ideal situation for the creation of a new residential neighborhood: several lots of available land inside the city limits, in an already established neighborhood with ready access to streetcar service, city sewers, and city water supplies. Together with real estate firm Wright and Kimbrough, the company took charge of subdividing and selling lots in the new development. Lots on the southern end, which were closer to the streetcar line, were larger and more expensive than those that were farther north and close to the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks. In a time when zoning restrictions had not yet come into existence, deed restrictions were placed on the four largest blocks in the southern end in order to encourage the creation of a quiet, uniform, residential neighborhood. The restrictions prohibited non-residential development, the construction of multi-family properties, and relocation of older houses. They also stipulated that houses had to be set back twenty-five feet from the sidewalk and no closer than three feet to the lots on either side.<sup>44</sup>

Wright and Kimbrough's design for Boulevard Park also called for several notable landscaped features that reflected the influence of the "City Beautiful" movement, which had been introduced at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 and sought to create modern, ordered, park-like cities and neighborhoods. In accordance with these principles, Boulevard Park

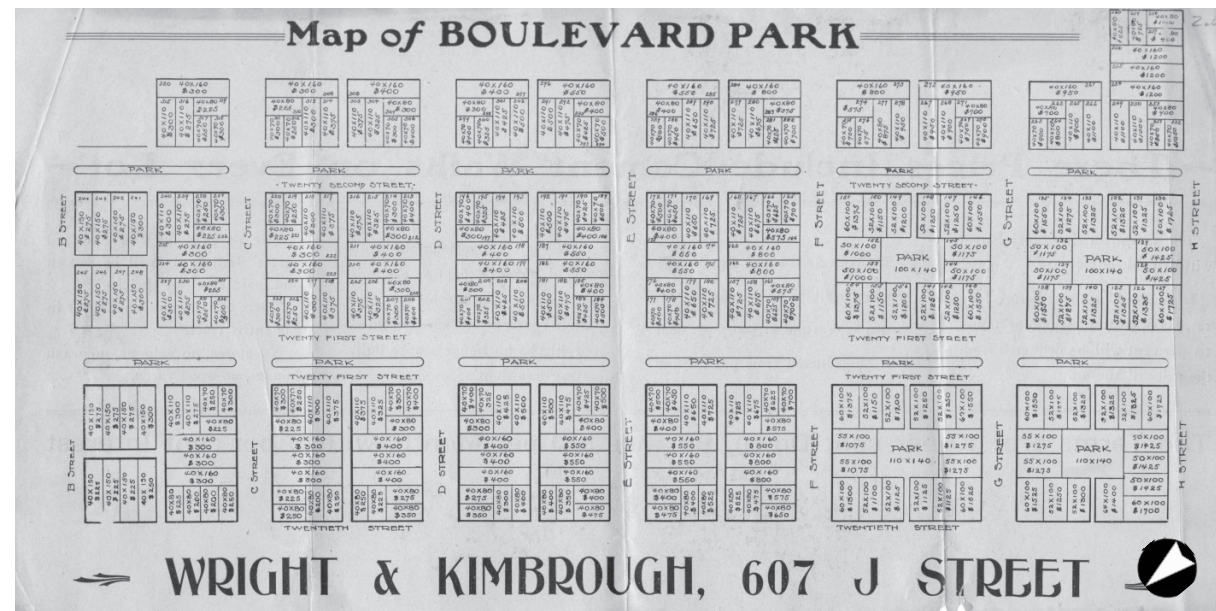


Figure 62. Map of Boulevard Park (1920). Source: Special Collections of the Sacramento Public Library, edited by Page & Turnbull.

was laid out along two wide boulevards, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets, each of which featured landscaped central medians that were planted with Canary Island date palms, Ginkgo biloba trees, and Mexican fan palms. The streets were also lined with landscaped parking strips in which rows of street trees were planted. English elms and sycamores were the most common trees planted along the streets, but other vegetation was also used. Among the most innovative elements of plans for the subdivision was the decision to create small 100 by 140-foot parks in the center alleys behind the four largest blocks on the subdivision's south end. Ultimately, only three of these "alley parks" were completed, all of which have survived in the present

historic district. Additional greenspace was provided by turning a block between C, B, 21<sup>st</sup>, and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets, which had been donated to the City by John A. Sutter Jr. in the nineteenth century for use as a public plaza, into Grant Park.<sup>55</sup>

Boulevard Park's "City Beautiful" design also integrated Progressive reform ideals. While lots on the development's southern edge, which were larger and closer to the streetcar lines, were intended to attract affluent residents, the smaller, less expensive lots on its northern edge offered working-class residents the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of suburban living

3 Burg, 8.2.  
 4 Ibid., 8.2-8.3.

5 Burg., 8.8.

at an affordable price. In addition, the subdivision enjoyed access to modern amenities, such as paved streets and sidewalks, modern plumbing, and use of the city's sewers and water lines.<sup>66</sup>

Wright and Kimbrough's designs for a quiet, pastoral neighborhood were impeded by the expansion of streetcar and railroad services, which brought more noise and industrial development to the area. In 1907, the main freight line of the Northern Electric Railway began operation down C Street through Boulevard Park and added a second streetcar line as part of the lease agreement. Two years later, the Western Pacific Railroad opened a new transcontinental line that ran between 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> streets. As a result, several light industrial businesses were built on lots adjacent to the B Street rail line at the neighborhood's northern edge. In spite of the disruption, the neighborhood was almost completely built up by 1915.

Because most of the parcels in Boulevard Park were developed during a relatively short and condensed period of time between 1905 and 1915, houses in the neighborhood were primarily built in the Arts and Crafts and Revival styles that were popular in the early twentieth century. Many of these were constructed in the Foursquare style, creating a unique concentration of these housing types in Sacramento.

Over the subsequent decades, several duplexes, apartments, and flats were constructed and a few older houses that predated the neighborhood were moved into Boulevard Park. Although these buildings did not conform to the original developer's intention to create a neighborhood with a uniform character

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 8.8-8.11.



Figure 63. View looking north on 21<sup>st</sup> Street from G Street (ca. 1910). Source: Center for Sacramento History, 2001/059/01155.

and design, the newly introduced buildings were compatible in scale and character to the rest of the neighborhood.<sup>77</sup> In the decades after World War II, the end of streetcar service to the area in 1946 and exodus of affluent residents from the city center to suburbs outside the city limits transformed Boulevard

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 8.3-8.4.

Park from a mixed-income suburb into a working class neighborhood.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 8.7.

## Significance

The Boulevard Park 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 portion of the district that contains the original Wright and Kimbrough subdivision—roughly bounded by 21<sup>st</sup> Street, G Street, the B Street levee, and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street—has also been nationally designated as a historic district and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Boulevard Park Historic District in 2011. Because it is listed on the National Register, the Boulevard Park Historic District is also automatically listed on the California Register of Historical Resources

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 Agriculture Context Statement and 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 Boulevard Park Historic District meets requirement (a) for listing on the Sacramento Register, because it is a geographically definable area.
(b)(i)	<p>The Boulevard Park 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>Boulevard Park is significant as a district that embodies the characteristics of early twentieth-century suburban neighborhood design and residential architecture. In particular, the subdivision’s design reflects the principles of the “City Beautiful” movement, which sought to create clean, modern residential neighborhoods in parklike settings. Elements of this design included the arrangement of houses along wide boulevards that were paved, lined with street trees, and landscaped with grassy medians down the center, as well as the creation of “alley parks” and a one-block public park to serve local residents. Progressive reform ideals also influenced planning for the subdivision, which included modern plumbing and access to the City’s sewers and water.</p> <p>Because the houses in the Boulevard Park subdivision were constructed over a relatively short ten-year period from 1905 to 1915, they also represent a cohesive collection of architecture from the early twentieth century. The most popular styles of the period—including Classical Revival, Prairie, and Craftsman—are well-represented in the neighborhood. Despite the variety of architectural styles, the neighborhood possesses a visual consistency, because of deed restrictions and other controls that were put in place to create an overall uniformity of building scale, quality, land use, and street design. This consistency of design and historic architecture survives today.</p> <p>The section of the district that runs along H street is also significant as an area that reflects residential development patterns and architectural styles that predate the subdivision of Boulevard Park. New residential neighborhoods that emerged as Sacramento grew to the east and south of the central city developed primarily along streetcar lines. The streetcar line on H Street was one of the city’s first and became the destination for many of Sacramento’s most prominent citizens in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This pattern is still evident along the street, which is lined with elegant Italianate, Queen Anne, Stick/Eastlake, Shingle, and Classical Revival houses from the period.</p>

## Period of Significance: 1871-1946

The period of significance for the Boulevard Park Historic District begins with the establishment of the streetcar line on H Street in 1871, which spurred early residential development in the area, and concludes with the end of streetcar service to the area in 1946.

## Property Types from the Period of Significance

- Residential
- Recreational
- Landscape

## Architectural Styles from the Period of Significance

- Italianate
- Stick/Eastlake
- Queen Anne
- Folk Victorian
- Shingle
- Classical Revival
- Colonial Revival
- Classic Box
- Tudor
- Beaux Arts
- Mission Revival
- Spanish Eclectic
- Mediterranean Revival
- Art Deco
- Prairie
- Craftsman
- Minimal Traditional
- Vernacular
- Landscape

<b>(B) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts</b>	
<b>(1) Requirements</b>	
(b)(ii)	<p>The Boulevard Park 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 district is significant as one of the first streetcar suburbs built within Sacramento’s city limits. It is also representative of the wider development of streetcar suburbs across the country as the expansion of public transportation at the turn-of-the-century allowed citizens to live farther from their places of work. While Sacramento’s early residential neighborhoods had been situated close to the central business district along the waterfront, the establishment of a streetcar line and the presence of the State Fair grounds at 20<sup>th</sup> and H streets attracted new residential development to the city’s outlying eastern areas along H Street and, later, to the Boulevard Park subdivision that replaced the fairgrounds in 1905. The addition of other streetcar and railroad lines through the neighborhood further accelerated the migration of people into the neighborhood in the early twentieth century. The end of streetcar service through the neighborhood in 1946 and the postwar migration of middle-class residents to newer automobile suburbs farther from the central city contributed to Boulevard Park’s transition into a working-class neighborhood after World War II.</p>
(c)	<p>The Boulevard Park 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.”</p>
<b>(B) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts</b>	
<b>(2) Factors to be considered</b>	
(a)	<p>Factor (2)(a) states that “a historic district should have integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship and association.” The Boulevard Park Historic District retains sufficient integrity to meet this factor for consideration as a historic district.</p>
(b)	<p>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 Boulevard Park 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.</p>

## Character-Defining Features

Element	Character of Historic District
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historically single-family homes, some converted into multi-family units, interspersed with apartment buildings and courtyard apartments dating to the period of significance</li> <li>Parking and auxiliary uses located along alleys</li> </ul>
Mass & Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally larger houses south of G Street—three stories with or without a basement is common</li> <li>Generally smaller houses on blocks north of F Street—mostly one story or one story with a raised basement Craftsman Bungalows or Neoclassical Rowhouses, interspersed with Minimal Traditional-style homes outside of the period of significance</li> <li>Classic Box-style homes on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets between F and H streets, and along H and I streets near former streetcar routes</li> <li>Largest, most elaborate houses located on the corners of blocks on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets</li> </ul>
Mass & Form (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Older, Victorian-era homes to the south of the Boulevard Park subdivision that were likely part of an earlier phase of development linked to the H Street streetcar line, the Union Park racetrack, and State Fair grounds</li> <li>Some large apartment buildings built within the period of significance scattered throughout the district</li> </ul>
Cladding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predominately wood siding, typically false bevel, narrow width channel rustic, and lap siding; brick; or stucco</li> </ul>
Roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Front-facing gabled, cross-gabled, and hipped roofs, often with dormers</li> <li>Low-pitch or flat rooflines on homes within the Boulevard Park subdivision boundaries</li> <li>Prominent clinker brick chimneys</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>Terrazzo, wood, concrete, cast stone, or brick stairs</li> <li>Paneled wood doors framed with side and transom windows</li> </ul>
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wood-frame double-hung, casement, paired, ribbon, cottage, and leaded glass windows</li> <li>Single and multi-story bay windows</li> </ul>
Porches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full, half, or central porches with overhangs supported by classical, square tapered, paired, and turned columns</li> <li>Second-story balconies directly above first-story porches</li> </ul>



Element	Character of Historic District
Ornamentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patterned shingles on the gabled ends, dormers, and portions of siding</li> <li>• Classical Revival details, including fluted pilasters, columns, dentils, and pedimented porticoes</li> <li>• Craftsman details, including wide overhanging eaves, exposed rafter tails, wood braces, tapered square columns, and low shed dormers</li> <li>• Apartment buildings with flat metal and swirled colored glass awnings over central entrance</li> </ul>
Property Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large, sloping front lawns</li> <li>• Brick patios with herringbone pattern and decorative cement grates</li> <li>• 12- to 16-foot-deep yards within the Boulevard Park subdivision boundaries</li> <li>• 20-foot-deep yards on H Street</li> <li>• Three alley parks behind homes facing 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets near the southern terminus of the Boulevard Park subdivisions</li> </ul>
Streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscaped 16-foot-wide boulevard medians down the center of 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets</li> <li>• Ginkgo trees in middle sections of boulevard medians, bookended by palms on north and south ends</li> <li>• Rows of palms lining H Street</li> </ul>

## Boundaries & Location

The following map shows the boundaries and location of the Boulevard Park 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.

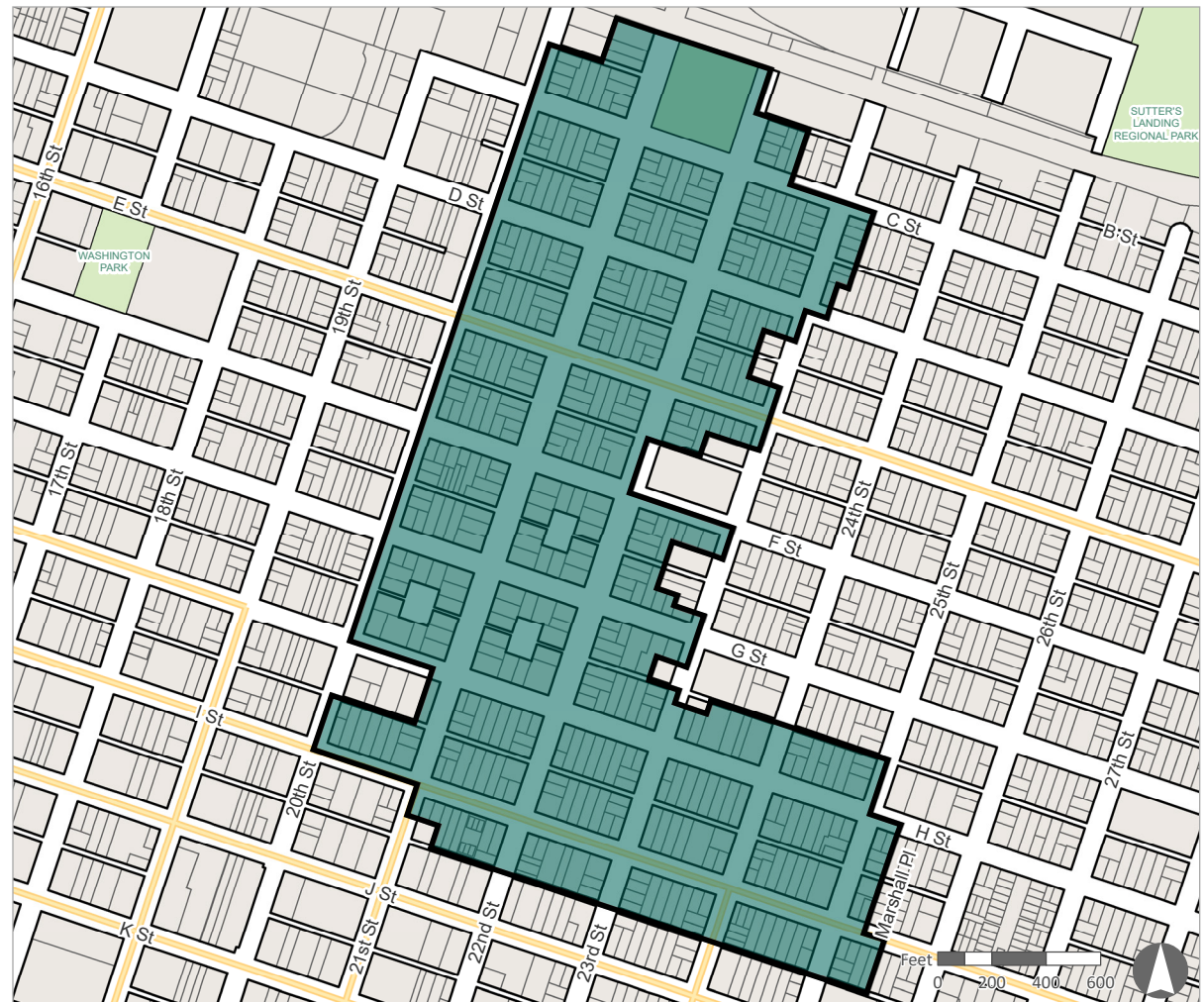
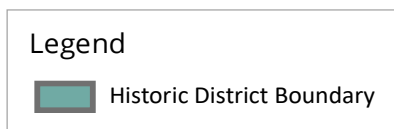


Figure 64. Map of the Boulevard Park Historic District. Source: Page & Turnbull and City of Sacramento, 2019.

## District-Specific Standards & Criteria

### Design Principle

*Maintain the unique site plan aspects the Boulevard Park Historic District and encourage design that supports the highly cohesive architectural character and significant landscape features of the historic district.*

### Rationale

The Boulevard Park Historic District is a visually cohesive residential district aligned along two landscaped boulevards, a planned residential community from the early twentieth century featuring lot sizes and open space amenities not found in other areas of Sacramento. Large Classic Box houses and Victorian-era houses predominate along blocks in the south end of the district, while smaller, single-story bungalows and Craftsman style houses are more common north of E Street. In spite of this scale variation, Boulevard Park is one of the city's most visually cohesive historic districts because of the consistent use of architectural styles, materials, siting, and landscaping. Additionally, the district contains few non-contributing resources. Because of the high level of integrity, visual uniformity, and defined scale of the district, physical changes may have a disproportionate impact on the character of the district.

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 Boulevard Park Historic District.

### 1. Rehabilitation of Contributing Resources

- 1.1 Maintain, preserve, and, where necessary, repair and restore historic elements associated with the Delta style of residential architecture, especially historic staircases, porches, and doors.



Figure 65. Large, Classic Box style houses with box-like massing are common on many blocks in the district.



Figure 66. The pattern of small, one-story houses on many streets in the district should be maintained.

## 2. Additions & Accessory Structures for Contributing Resources

- 2.1 Design additions with proportions that are compatible with the proportions and massing that are typical of contributing buildings on the same block.
- Minimize the effect of additions on symmetrical building facades or compositions.
- 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.
- 2.3 Avoid designing rear or side alterations that extend into historic alley parks.

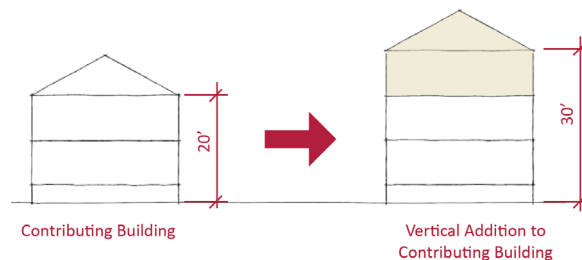


Figure 67. Additions should not cause a building's height to exceed 150% of its historic height.

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

- 3.1 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.
  - Larger buildings with box massing are generally appropriate on H Street and 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets south of F Street, while smaller buildings with horizontal massing are generally appropriate on lettered streets and 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets north of F Street.
- 3.2 Buildings along H Street should have a 20-foot-deep setback; buildings along 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets should have a 12- to 16-foot-deep setback.
- 3.3 Draw inspiration for the design of multi-family residential properties from contributing multi-family residential properties in the district.
- Courtyard apartments and two-story buildings with symmetrical facades and street-facing entries are appropriate historic precedents.
- 3.4 Consider providing covered front porches or entries at new infill development to preserve the historic district's visual pattern of porches.

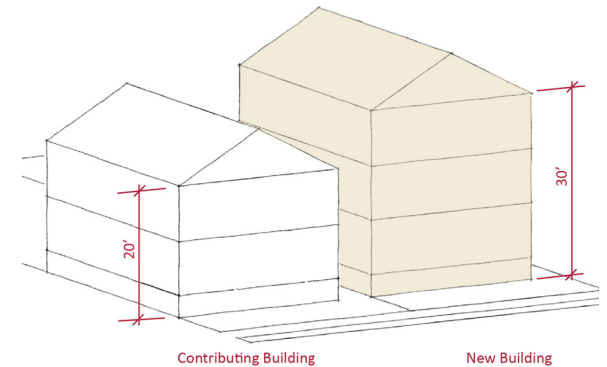


Figure 68. The height of new buildings should be no more than 150% of the height of surrounding contributing buildings.



Figure 69. Two-story apartment buildings with street-facing entries provide a historic example for integrating multi-family residential buildings into the district.

## 4. Site Features, Streetscape, & Landscaping

4.1 Preserve, maintain, and where necessary, repair or replant historic features and plantings of the landscaped medians on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets.

- If it is necessary to replace a historic tree (such as a palm or ginkgo tree) or planting in the landscaped medians, replace it in-kind or, if suffering from disease, select a similar species to maintain the historic planting pattern.

4.2 Preserve and maintain the open, planted character of alley parks.

- Alterations, additions, or building accessory structures that extend into alley parks are inappropriate.

- Parking and paved driveways should be avoided.
- Encourage natural pathways, park seating and pedestrian-oriented features to support passive activities in the alley parks.

4.3 Preserve and maintain the historic open, planted, size, and grade of front yards, especially at the large, sloping lawns in front of properties on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets.

4.4 Preserve and maintain historic hitching posts and carriage barns in their original locations.

4.5 Avoid creating new curb cuts or driveways in front of properties along 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, and H streets.

- Locate parking and service access along alleys, and use landscaping features to screen it from the public right-of-way, wherever possible.



Figure 70. Courtyard apartments also provide a historic example for integrating higher density residential housing into the district.



Figure 71. The landscaped medians on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets are a character-defining feature of the district that should be preserved and maintained.



Figure 72. Alley parks behind houses on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> streets are part of the original planned design of Boulevard Park.

## 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.
- 5.4 Design secondary dwelling units to include windows and entries facing alleys and alley parks.

