

# Standards & Criteria Common to Sacramento's Historic Districts

Per the Sacramento City Code, a historic district plan must be adopted for each City-designated historic district that addresses “the goals for review of development projects within the historic district” and “the standards and criteria to be utilized in determining the appropriateness of any development project involving a landmark, contributing resource or noncontributing resource” within the historic district.

The standards and criteria are based on, and written to be consistent with, the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and the associated *Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings*. In addition, many of Sacramento's historic districts developed during a similar time period and share similar physical characteristics. As such, many of the standards and criteria are universal and apply to projects within any historic district.

The following Standards & Criteria Common to Sacramento's Historic Districts have been developed to create clear and consistent guidance for the development of projects within Sacramento's locally-listed historic districts.

Standards and criteria that address the specific and unique characteristics of the individual historic districts are included at the end of each district's individual historic district plan in Section 2.

## 1. Rehabilitation of Contributing Resources

Of the four treatments listed in the *Secretary of the Interior's Standard's for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, the Standards for Rehabilitation allow for the most flexibility and are the most commonly applied to proposed projects. The Standards & Criteria Common to Sacramento's Historic Districts build specifically upon the Standards for Rehabilitation to provide guidance for projects related to contributing resources within Sacramento's historic districts.



Figure 10. The window and door frames of this house have been replaced with new wood frames that match the original.

## Treatment of Historic Features

### Design Principle

*When planning a project involving modifications to a contributing resource in a historic district, retain and preserve its historic features and materials and, in particular, the character-defining features associated with the architectural style and with the historic district in which the property is located. A historic district's character-defining features are listed in its individual historic district plan.*

### Rationale

Historic features, and especially character-defining features, are essential to establishing the visual character of a contributing resource or historic district. Alterations to historic features have the potential to significantly change an individual resource's character and impact the overall character of the historic district.

Best practices in historic preservation encourage approaching projects with a treatment hierarchy that starts with the least invasive interventions and progresses to those that involve the most change. Property owners should also be mindful of the minimum maintenance requirements that are prescribed under Sacramento City Code.

## Design Guidelines

- 1.1 Maintain, repair, and restore historic exterior features, whenever possible, before considering replacement.
  - Patching, piecing-in, splicing, or consolidating existing deteriorated materials, using recognized preservation methods, is encouraged.
- 1.2 Maintain the size, form, proportions, material, and arrangement of historic features.
- 1.3 Replace historic features that are deteriorated beyond repair in-kind, to the extent feasible.
  - In-kind replacement refers to the replacement of a historic feature with matching material, design, proportion, composition and finish.
  - Use replacement only where portions or elements of a historic feature are deteriorated beyond repair.
  - If a majority of a non-historic material needs to be repaired or replaced (such as roofing or siding), it is recommended to replace all of the non-historic material so that it matches the historic condition to the extent feasible.
- 1.4 Avoid introducing new architectural elements or details where they did not exist historically.
  - The addition of new features or stylistic elements based on conjecture or that represent a different time period or architectural style than the existing property is discouraged.



Figure 11. A new pilaster cap replaced with new wood to match the historic, damaged feature.



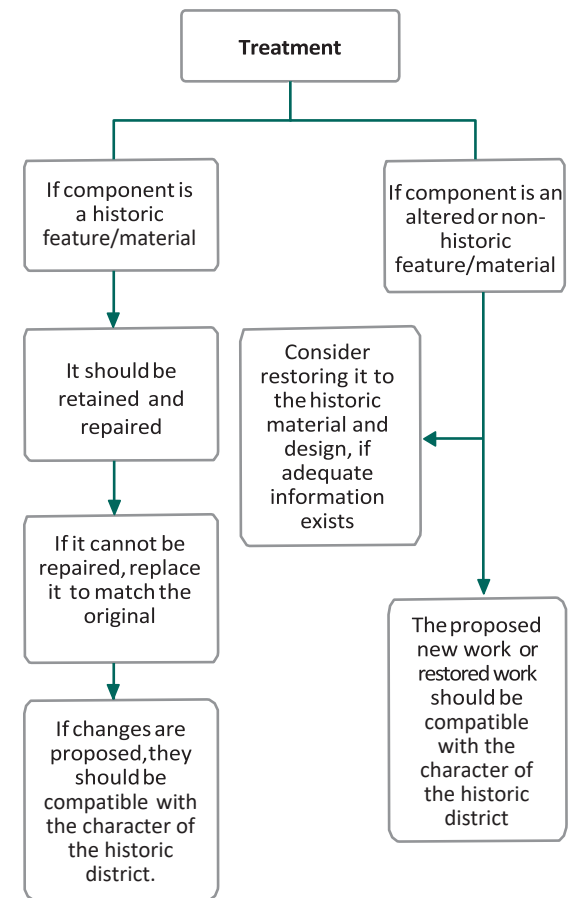
Figure 12. A new turret, porch, and window openings have been added to this house.



Figure 13. The porch and primary façade of this house have been covered by a later addition.

- 1.5 Avoid covering or obscuring character-defining features.
- 1.6 Avoid the use of vinyl windows and false divided lites.
- 1.7 Protect architectural details from moisture accumulation and infiltration that may cause damage.
- 1.8 Use methods that minimize damage to the historic materials when disassembly of a historic element is necessary for its restoration.
  - When necessary, document the location of a historic feature that will be disassembled so that it may be repositioned accurately after restoration is complete.
- 1.9 Use procedures for cleaning, refinishing, and repairing historic architectural materials that will maintain the historic material and finish.
  - Use the gentlest means possible that will achieve the desired results without damaging the historic materials.
- 1.10 Replace features that are altered, missing, or non-historic with new features that match the building's original features if adequate evidence exists to determine its historic appearance and material.
  - For example, it is appropriate to replace non-original aluminum or vinyl windows where wooden single or double-hung windows existed historically as proven by historic photographs.

- 1.11 When adequate evidence of an altered, missing, or non-historic feature's original appearance and materials is not available, design new, replacement features to be compatible with the character of the contributing resource and historic district.
  - For example, the replacement of a non-historic entry may incorporate a new awning or raised porch if appropriate to the architectural style of the contributing property and the character of the historic district.
- 1.12 Preserve significant publicly-accessible interior spaces and features which are character-defining.
  - Industrial buildings generally do not include publicly-accessible interior spaces.
- 1.13 Preserve and retain ground floor features of historic commercial storefronts such as bulkhead panels, kick plates, configuration of display windows, and recessed entryways.
- 1.14 Consider removing non-historic alterations that are not consistent with the historic design of a commercial storefront and overall architectural style.
  - Where a historic storefront is no longer extant, consider rehabilitating the storefront with a design that is a contemporary interpretation of the original historic storefront or surrounding historic storefronts.





## Building System Upgrades

### Design Principle

*Carefully plan building systems upgrades to minimize impacts on the integrity of the historic property and historic district, while enhancing the natural heating and cooling features inherent to historic buildings.*

### Rationale

The desire to modernize mechanical systems is one of the most common reasons to alter a historic building. Although historic features such as tree canopies, roof overhangs, porches, and attic ventilation are useful in mitigating the effects of high temperatures, standards of interior climate comfort levels have changed over the last few centuries, and upgrading historic buildings so that they are comfortable for today's users is necessary to ensure that these buildings continue to be used and maintained. The replacement of older mechanical systems with new heating, ventilation, or air conditioning systems (HVAC) is thus a common goal for buildings in historic districts.

Additionally, increased awareness of energy efficiency and conserving resources involve reconsideration of how people live comfortably and responsibly. Repairing and retaining existing historic features is, itself, an inherently "green" approach, because it saves energy and materials. Building system upgrades, "green" building approaches, and the preservation of a building's significant historic characteristics are not mutually exclusive and can work in tandem when

integrated into the planning process.

### Design Guidelines

1.15 Repair and maintain historic energy-saving features, wherever possible.

- Retain historic features that allow for natural climate control, such as roof overhangs, operable windows, shutters, porches, and awnings.
- Where feasible, use plants, including shade trees, to provide natural cooling without affecting the historic property.
- If windows are deteriorated beyond repair, install new operable windows.
- Most heat loss related to older windows is the result of air leakage through gaps that have developed because of a lack of maintenance. Repair historic single-pane windows so they function properly and are tight fitting, and consider installing weather stripping or glazing film, rather than replacing windows with double pane or thermal pane units.

1.16 Explore improvements that enhance the performance of historic energy-saving features.

- Install operable systems such as curtains or shades, insulated coverings, or window films that lower heat radiation to enhance the performance of historic windows and doors.



Figure 14. New double-hung windows have been installed on this house.



- Provide insulation below raised floors, in attic space or within accessible wall cavities to provide valuable insulation to the building envelope.
- Install draft stoppers in chimneys.
- Use plantings that provide shade.
- Promote ventilation with operable windows, house fans, and low-profile attic vents.

1.17 Place mechanical equipment in areas that are minimally visible from the street and neighboring properties.

- Mechanical equipment should be placed at ground level, or to the rear or side of the property and screened from view.
- Where possible, install new ductwork within basement and wall voids rather than within attic spaces to improve efficiency.
- If equipment, such as solar panels, must be placed on the roof, configure panels to the extent feasible parallel to the roof plane, with a minimal profile, with no overhang, and no alteration of the existing roof lines.
- Where infeasible to install a conventional cooling system, install ground-mounted condensers that feed an interior “duct-less” cooling system. If ground-mounted condensers are not an option, wall- or roof-mounted condensers should not be visible from the street or neighboring properties.
- Window-mounted air-conditioning units on front facades are prohibited.

- Equipment mounted directly on a building should be attached using the least invasive method and without damaging character-defining features.
- Install new electric, water, and gas meters so they are not visible from the street, where feasible.
- Consider equipment systems that do not require visible, exterior equipment.

1.18 Consider sustainable materials and energy efficient strategies while planning exterior alterations, where possible.



Figure 15. The solar panels and attic vents on the roof of this house are appropriately mounted so that they have a low profile and are minimally visible from the street.



Figure 16. An example of roof-mounted mechanical equipment that is highly visible from the street.

## Moving A Contributing Resource

### Design Principle

*Contributing resources must remain in their historic locations unless practical considerations necessitate relocation. If a resource is moved, every effort must be made to reestablish its historic orientation, immediate setting, and general environment in the new location and ensure its continued use.*

### Rationale

The collective grouping of contributing resources and their relationships to one another is essential to the character of historic districts. The removal or relocation of contributing resources destroys the historic relationship between buildings and the landscape.

## Design Guidelines

- 1.19 Avoid moving a contributing resource unless there is no feasible alternative for preservation at its historic location.
- 1.20 Relocate contributing resources within the same historic district, whenever possible.
  - The relocation of a contributing resource should support or enhance the historic streetscape pattern and context of its new location.
- 1.21 If it is necessary to move a contributing resource to another historic district, the resource should be compatible with the architectural styles and period of significance of the historic district to which it will be moved.
- 1.22 Consider and respect impacts on characteristic landscape features and surrounding contributing resources when relocating a building.
- 1.23 Relocate a historic resource so that its new location and orientation are consistent with the setbacks, side-to-side spacing pattern, and street-facing orientation that characterize its proposed new location.

## 2. Additions & Accessory Buildings for Contributing Resources

Projects proposed for a contributing resource in Sacramento's historic districts may involve the construction of additions and accessory buildings. Additions shall be planned sensitively in order to have a minimal impact on the historic district's character-defining features. The guidelines in this section are intended to accommodate change—yet also help safeguard a contributing resource's distinctive form, historic character, and relationship to its historic district.

### Additions

#### Design Principle

*Additions must be respectful of the existing character-defining features of the property and be designed in a manner that is compatible with the historic character of the contributing resource and the historic district. The impact to the individual resource's features and to the public view of the resource will be important factors in approving proposed designs. Appropriate scale and massing are important considerations to ensure that an addition does not overwhelm the primary building. Additions should be of their time and distinguished from the resource's historic features, yet not in a manner that distracts from the resource.*

#### Rationale

This strategy maintains the historic visual impression of the building, as well as the overall streetscape pattern as experienced in the public realm. For a contributing resource to maintain its historic status, its historic and architectural integrity cannot be diminished or undergo significant impacts. A sensitive addition that respects the historic material, is compatible, and is differentiated helps the contributing resource retain its integrity.

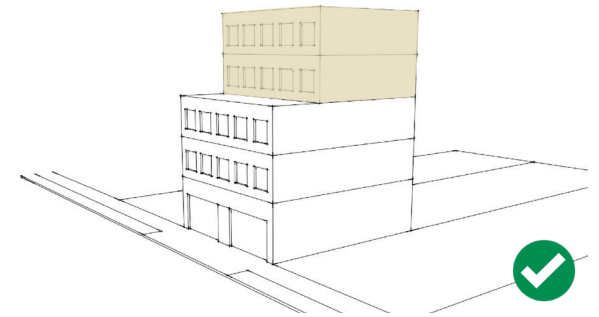


Figure 17. The use of step backs at roof top additions is recommended.



Figure 18. This rooftop addition does not detract from the character of the historic building, because it is setback from the primary facades.



## Design Guidelines

2.1 Refrain from obscuring, altering or demolishing character-defining features in order to accommodate new additions.

- Whenever possible, elect instead to make alterations and additions in areas that are not visible to the public.
- Avoid demolishing character-defining features, particularly at primary and secondary facades visible from the public right-of-way.
- Existing additions and alterations that occurred during the period of significance for the historic district may contribute to the resource's historic character and should be assessed.

2.2 Locate additions to minimize their visibility from the public right-of-way and maintain the primacy of the main building.

- Construct additions at the rear of a contributing resource whenever possible.
- Avoid making additions to primary façades.

- Incorporate a clear setback for vertical additions; rooftop additions are ideal if not visible from the street.
- Set back side additions clearly from the primary façade to distinguish the historic building and minimize impacts to the streetscape. Side additions should not project forward of the primary façade.
- Horizontal additions may consider using a "hyphen" to connect the two volumes.

2.3 Respect the massing and scale of the main building when designing an addition.

- The existing height and width of the main building should be perceivable regardless the size of the addition.

2.4 Draw inspiration from the contributing resource's character-defining features when designing the new addition.

- Consider using complementary materials, datum lines and articulation.
- The solid-to-void pattern of an addition should generally be consistent with that of the contributing resource.
- Design new dormers on residential buildings and upper-story additions on all buildings in a style that is compatible with the architectural vocabulary of the contributing resource.
- Consider using a change of plane to differentiate an addition from the historic building.



Figure 19. The rooftop addition on this house has been setback from the front facade.



Figure 20. This addition has been added over the building's primary, street-facing facade and porch.

- 2.5 Avoid matching the addition too closely to the architectural style of the contributing resource and creating a false impression that the addition is historic construction.
- 2.6 When additions will destroy or obscure original door and window openings, carefully dismantle these openings, and relocate these features to the new exterior wall.
- 2.7 Salvage and reuse existing siding, trim, and other architectural elements to the extent feasible when removal is required as part of an alteration or addition to a contributing building.
- 2.8 When demolition of a historic resource is necessary to ensure the health, safety, or welfare of the public, salvage historic architectural elements to the extent feasible and make these available for reuse on other projects in the district.



Figure 21. The new dormer on the right is compatible with the design of the original building.



Figure 22. A change of plane differentiates this addition from the historic building.

## Detached Secondary Dwelling Units, Garages, & Storage Structures (Accessory Buildings)

### Design Principle

*Construction of detached secondary dwelling units, garages, and storage structures (accessory buildings) shall be designed in a manner that is compatible with and differentiated from the contributing resource in order to preserve the character of the historic district while increasing density or accommodating the property owner's needs.*

### Rationale

Property owners may wish to add a secondary dwelling unit or accessory building, such as a garage or storage structure, to a lot within a historic district. The addition of new secondary buildings or structures can have significant impacts on the historic spatial relationships and appearance of the contributing building. It is important to design such buildings so that the contributing building remains the primary focal point and its integrity is not impaired.

This section addresses detached secondary dwelling units that are not located along an alley and accessory buildings. For infill projects, including secondary dwelling units, that are located on an alley, refer to the section on Alley Infill.

### Design Guidelines

- 2.9 Refrain from obscuring or negatively impacting character-defining features, volumes, and spatial relationships in order to accommodate secondary dwelling units and accessory buildings.
- 2.10 Locate detached secondary dwelling units and accessory buildings at the rear of the property and preserve the primacy of the contributing resource.
  - Attached secondary dwelling units and accessory buildings should be located where there is minimal visual impact to the contributing resource's primary façade, preferably along the alley at the rear of a property.
  - Avoid designing secondary dwelling units and accessory buildings that are flush with or extend forward from the primary façade of a contributing resource.
- 2.11 Build secondary dwelling units and accessory buildings in a scale that is compatible with and does not overwhelm the contributing resource.
  - Avoid designing a secondary dwelling unit or accessory building that is significantly taller than the contributing resource or that is highly visible from the street.

Refer to Section 2 for additional standards and criteria regarding setbacks and building heights in individual historic districts.

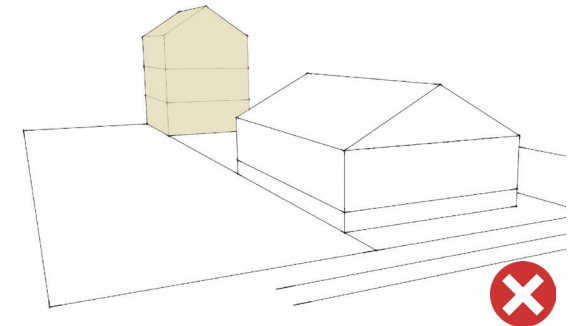


Figure 23. This secondary dwelling unit (highlighted) is appropriately located at the rear of the property; however, its height causes it to visually dominate the main house on the lot.



Figure 24. This new garage is appropriately located at the rear of the property and scaled to the surrounding residential properties.



- It is recommended that the height of new secondary dwelling units and accessory buildings, including roof plate and roof line, generally fall within the height range of existing contributing resources in the district.
  - Minimize the impact of a new building that is taller than surrounding contributing resources by breaking up its mass into smaller components or modules that relate to the scale and massing of the surrounding contributing resources and stepping it back.
- 2.12 Design secondary dwelling units and accessory buildings to be compatible with the design of contributing resource.
- Consider incorporating proportions and profiles into the design of the new accessory building that are compatible with the scale, massing, and proportions of the primary building.
  - Consider using a more restrained use of architectural style and features so that the accessory structure does not visually compete with the contributing resource and is clearly subordinate to it. Replicating the architectural style of the contributing resource is not required.
  - Landscaping, if feasible, that enhances the building and street and/or alley is encouraged.
  - When feasible, provide space for utility units inside new alley accessory buildings to promote a pedestrian friendly environment.
- 2.13 When adding a new building or structure to a lot, respect and consider the prevailing pattern, location, and ratio of building-to-open-space lot coverage that is characteristic of contributing parcels in the district.
- Siting of new accessory buildings and secondary dwelling units should also carefully consider the impact on buildings on adjacent parcels and avoid aligning with wall openings on adjacent buildings.
- 2.14 Provide entrances, fenestration, and lighting on the street or alley, unless incompatible with use.

## Raising a Building

### Design Principle

*Consider raising a historic building where a flood basement exists or where there is no other alternative to accomplish the project objectives. A building may be raised only if the overall character of the historic building will remain intact.*

### Rationale

Many buildings in Sacramento were constructed in the nineteenth century with a flood basement. This resulted in the city's distinctive "Delta style" house form in which primary residential spaces were located above a raised basement and accessed by a long wooden staircase leading up from the sidewalk. While there is a historic precedent for raising buildings in some of Sacramento's historic districts, this tradition only applied to certain architectural styles and would not be appropriate for architectural styles that did not feature vertical massing and tall heights. Raising a building also alters the arrangement and appearance of porches and front staircases, which are also prominent character-defining features in many historic districts.

## Design Guidelines

2.15 Avoid raising a building unless there is an existing flood basement or there is no other alternative for achieving a legal code requirement, particularly for ground floor units.

- Contributing buildings with an existing floor, or high, basement may be raised in order to convert the basement into a new ground floor unit.

2.16 Minimize the visual impacts of raising a building on surrounding properties and the overall streetscape.

- The raised building should be in proportion to other adjacent contributing buildings.
- Align new window openings with historic window openings in the historic building as closely as possible.

2.17 Use subtle changes in material or detailing to differentiate the addition from the historic building.

2.18 Consider whether a building's integrity will remain intact if it is raised.

- The overall design of character-defining features such as porches and stairs should be preserved.
- Consider digging out a basement, rather than raising a building, to avoid modifications to front stairs and changes to the building's overall height in relation to surrounding contributing buildings.

- Raising buildings designed in architectural styles in which low, horizontal massing or small scale is a distinctive characteristic, such as most Craftsman, Minimal Traditional, or Ranch style houses, is generally discouraged.
- 2.19 Minimize the visual impact of stair extensions that result from raising a building.
- Preserve and maintain historic porch and stair details, forms, and configurations.
  - An extended staircase should not impact the important features of the site.
  - Avoid turning stairs to accommodate raising a building if the stairs originally faced the street.

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

This section provides standards and criteria for construction of infill development for residential, commercial and mixed-use projects that apply generally to Sacramento's historic districts. Guidelines that apply specifically to a certain historic district are identified in its historic district plan.

New construction should be reflective of its time and be harmonious with existing historic buildings in terms of setting or site layout, building massing, architectural character, and building materials. Infill development should be developed in such a way as to respect, reflect, or enhance the surrounding historic fabric in each district.

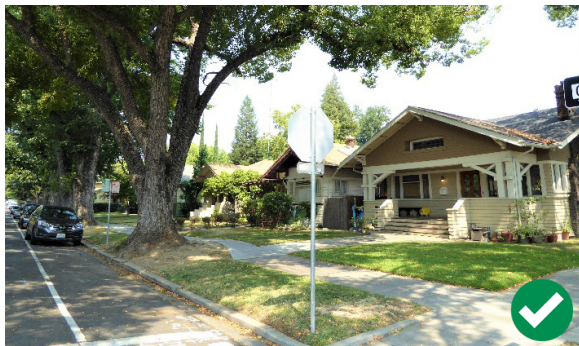


Figure 26. The houses in the Bungalow Row Historic District are set back a uniform distance from the street to create a consistent block face.

### Setbacks, Setting, Location, & Site Layout

#### Design Principle

*Alterations to existing buildings and new construction must support the historic setbacks, setting, location, and site layout of the historic district in which it is located. This can be accomplished by siting buildings on their lots to reflect historic development and streetscape patterns.*

#### Rationale

Building setbacks and site layout determine the overall rhythm and visual continuity of a street and vary between different areas of Sacramento. Buildings in the Central City have historically been oriented within the city's original 1848 street grid to face the street, creating a pedestrian-friendly public environment. Primarily commercial or industrial historic districts, meanwhile, often have a strong street wall of buildings that are built to the front lot line, while primarily residential historic districts are usually characterized by deeper yet consistent setbacks and typically have some open yard space at the rear. Such setbacks reinforce the rhythm and visual cohesiveness of the street and surrounding area as a whole. Areas outside the Central City follow different patterns of site layout and building setbacks that are reflective of their district uses and periods of development. The site design of infill development should reinforce these existing historic patterns.

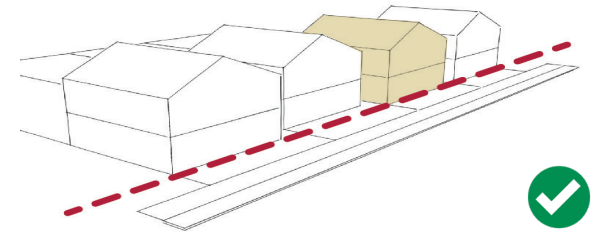


Figure 27. The setback of the new house falls within the range of setbacks of neighboring contributing resources.

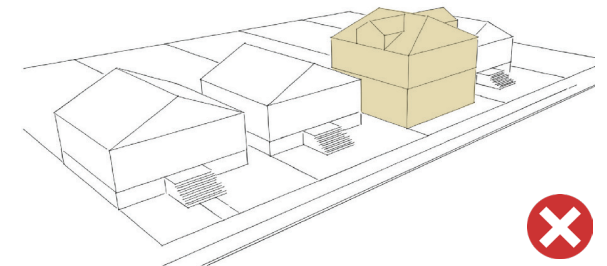


Figure 28. The site placement of the new building does not respect the setbacks of the adjacent contributing buildings.

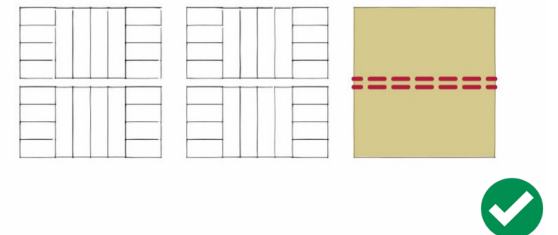


Figure 29. Maintain the historic pattern of circulation from adjacent blocks.



## Design Guidelines

- 3.1 Refrain from visually impairing the primary front façade of a contributing resource.
- 3.2 Mitigate views from new construction into adjacent residential structures.
  - Strategically place windows, balconies, and roof decks to protect the private realm of adjacent properties.
  - Use landscaping or screening features to respect privacy of semi-private outdoor spaces.
- 3.3 Orient the primary facades and entries of new construction to primary street(s) or alleys in residential and commercial districts in the Central City.
  - Corner parcels should follow the existing development pattern of adjacent or nearby contributing properties.
  - Courtyard properties should include sidewalk-facing features and elements that address the street and neighborhood pattern.
- 3.4 Set back new buildings to be consistent with the setback pattern of adjacent contributing properties in order to maintain a continuous street wall and delineation of public spaces.
  - Where the setbacks of neighboring contributing resources vary, the setback of new construction should fall within the established range of setbacks of contributing resources in the historic district.

- 3.5 Provide side setbacks that are consistent with the historic pattern of spacing between adjacent contributing buildings on the same block.
- 3.6 Provide adequate space between new infill buildings and existing buildings to preserve historic development patterns and prevent overcrowding.
  - When adding a new building to a lot, respect and consider the prevailing pattern, location, and ratio of building-to-open-space lot coverage that is characteristic of contributing parcels in the district.
  - Siting of new infill building should also carefully consider the impact on buildings on adjacent parcels and avoid blocking existing wall openings in adjacent buildings.

- 3.7 Allowable encroachments into the setback zone include fences, sidewalks, porches and stoops, so long as existing street wall is maintained by the front façade.
- 3.8 Maintain a street grid or circulation system that ties into the surrounding pattern of streets and pathways at infill construction that conjoins more than one parcel and allows for pedestrian or vehicular circulation through the conjoined site.
- 3.9 In predominantly residential areas, include a landscaped front yard that is compatible in size to the front yards of neighboring contributing resources.
- 3.10 When feasible, include a walkway from new buildings facing the street to maintain the traditional visual connection of buildings to the street.

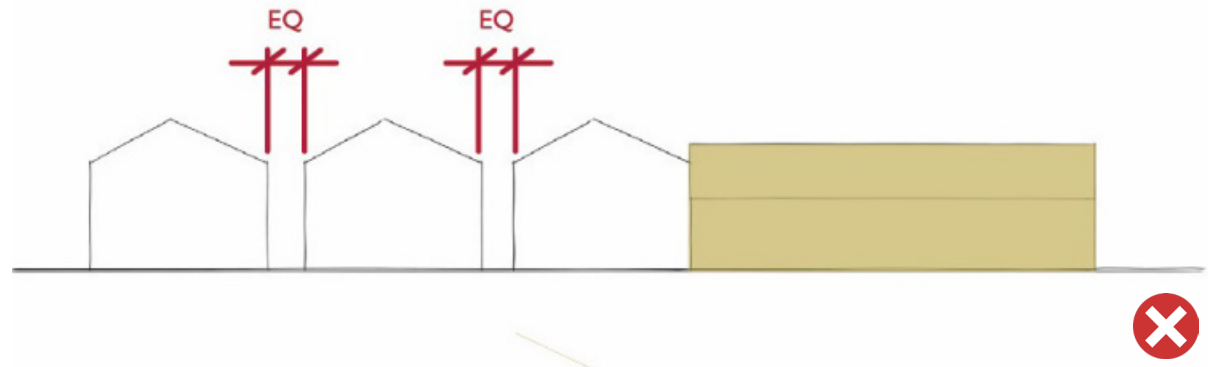


Figure 30. The new building on the right does not respect the existing pattern of space and side setbacks between adjacent contributing resources.

## Building Massing, Scale, & Form

### Design Principle

*Design new infill construction so that its massing, scale, and form is compatible with the contributing buildings within the historic district. Pay special attention to the block face where the infill project is located.*

### Rationale

Buildings that respect the massing, scale, and form of the historic built fabric reinforce and enhance the visual continuity and quality of the historic districts.

## Design Guidelines

3.11 Design new buildings with an understanding of the historic context, character-defining features, and historic significance of the historic district.

- Refer to examples of historic resources that strongly contribute to the historic district, rather than non-contributors or inappropriately altered structures.
- Infill on non-contributing properties, including vacant lots, should take design inspiration from surrounding contributing properties.

3.12 Develop the scale, proportions, and volumes of new buildings to be compatible with those of adjacent contributing properties.

- New buildings that are significantly larger than contributing buildings on the same block are discouraged.

3.13 When designing new buildings, take into consideration the height range of existing contributing resources in the district (including roof plate and roof line).<sup>1</sup>

- Pay special attention to the heights of contributing resources on the block face or where the infill project is located.

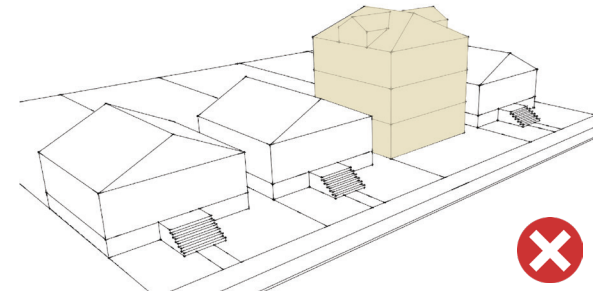


Figure 31. The height and massing of the new building does not respect those of the surrounding contributing buildings.



Figure 32. The height, massing, scale, and form of this new house is compatible with the historic houses on either side.

<sup>1</sup> City code section 17.180.030 defines the height of a building as "the vertical dimension measured from the average elevation of the finished lot grade at the front of the building to the plate line, where the roof meets the wall."

- Minimize the impact of a new building that is significantly taller than surrounding contributing resources by breaking up its mass into smaller components or modules that relate to the scale and massing of the surrounding contributing resources.
- Masses that are taller than contributing resources in the district should be stepped back from the primary street-facing facade(s).

3.14 Draw broad inspiration for the design of new buildings from contributing buildings of the same type (single- or multi-family residential, commercial, industrial, civic) in the historic district.

- New construction should be reflective “of its time” and avoid mimicking historic styles.

3.15 Step down the height of a taller new building when located adjacent to a shorter contributing building.

3.16 Taller buildings may be appropriate at terminus, corner sites or important commercial corridors.

3.17 Orient primary facades and entries of new construction in residential and commercial districts in the Central City to primary street(s).



Figure 33. These new apartment buildings match the setback, scale, and street-facing orientation of adjacent contributing buildings.



Figure 34. The larger massing of this multi-family residential building has been broken down into smaller modules that relate to the surrounding neighborhood.

## Architectural Character

### Design Principle

*New architecture must enhance the visual compositional quality of a historic district by exploring new creative, artistic visions that respect and respond to the area's established historic character, range of attributes, and context.*

### Rationale

The variety of architectural styles in a historic district is one of the key physical attributes that contribute to the visual character and appealing quality of these areas. New building designs that ignore the historic built fabric in a district may significantly alter and detract from this experience. New designs and creativity that respect and respond to their surrounding historic context can enhance the existing relationships within the historic district and should be encouraged.

## Design Guidelines

- 3.18 Avoid imitating or replicating historic styles in new construction in a manner that could be falsely interpreted as historic.
- 3.19 Consider the incorporation or contemporary interpretation of design features of nearby or adjacent historic buildings into public facing facades to strengthen important relationships that exist between properties. Use modern methods and materials to incorporate architectural characteristics of nearby or adjacent historic styles without mimicking.
- 3.20 Consider incorporating traditional commercial storefront elements—such as a kickplate, display windows, recessed primary entrance, and door and storefront transom windows—in the design of new storefronts.
  - Recess the primary entrance door back an adequate amount from the front facade to establish a distinct threshold for pedestrians.
- 3.21 Design building components and features to be of a compatible scale and placement to those of surrounding contributing properties.
- 3.22 Design new buildings with passive cooling features found in historic districts.
  - When not possible, utilize the average datum lines of contributing properties.
  - Consider incorporating operable windows, covered porches, high ceilings, and perimeter foundations with ductwork run below the building.



Figure 35. The City Hall extension features a contemporary design that respects and enhances the character of the surrounding historic district.



## Building Materials & Finishes

### Design Principle

*Choose building materials used in new construction that are appropriate to its architectural style and of a quality, scale, color and texture that is compatible with the character of the historic district.*

### Rationale

The materials and finishes of a building help to define its style, quality, relationship to human scale and the color and texture of a neighborhood. Appropriate material selections offer a distinctive way to provide visual cohesion within the block or district.

### Design Guidelines

- 3.23 Use exterior materials similar to or compatible with those found on adjacent or nearby contributing properties within the district.
- 3.24 Use high quality, environmentally friendly building materials that are consistent with the materials of adjacent or nearby contributing properties within the district.
- 3.25 Avoid obviously synthetic materials that mimic traditional building materials.



Figure 36. The materials of the new infill on the left echo the horizontal wood siding and features on the adjacent contributing building.



Figure 37. The incorporation of traditional materials, such as wood siding, into new designs can help infill with a contemporary design blend in with a historic neighborhood.

## Windows & Doors

### Design Principle

*Window and door openings shall reinforce the patterns of pedestrian circulation, visual connection, and solid-to-void ratios of adjacent or nearby contributing resources within the block.*

### Rationale

Windows and doors are primary features that help to define the connection between the street and the building, as well as depth, scale and rhythm of a building. These openings provide articulation and transparency to a façade.

### Design Guidelines

- 3.26 Incorporate window and door datum lines that are compatible with those of adjacent contributing resources.
- 3.27 Consider location of doorways and circulation patterns along street with new proposed entryways.
- 3.28 Use window and door materials that match or are sympathetic with the historic fabric of surrounding contributing resources.
- 3.29 Use proportions, depth, and materiality at window and door openings that are reflective of those found in nearby or adjacent contributing buildings within the historic district.



Figure 38. The use of vinyl frame windows with false divided lights are not compatible with the wood frame windows of the contributing building on the left.



Figure 39. The horizontal window and opening datum lines of the infill on the left are aligned with those of the contributing building on the right.



Figure 40. The proportions, depth, and materiality of the window and door openings of these infill buildings reflect those of many contributing buildings found throughout Sacramento's historic districts.

## 4. Site Features, Streetscape, & Landscaping

Site features, streetscape, and landscaping are critical components in forming the character of a historic district. Everything from the overall streetscape, street pattern, and relationships between buildings and open spaces, and the front yards to the public sphere of streets, sidewalks, and parks, contribute to the historic district's character and sense of place.

Much of the public realm—the street grid, streets, and street trees—is overseen by the City of Sacramento. However, property owners can have a large impact on the character of a historic district through landscaping, fences and walls, and driveways and walkways in front of individual properties. It is important, therefore, that such work respects the character-defining features of the district, while also adhering to other City ordinances, codes, and regulations.

## Fencing & Screening

### Design Principle

*Fencing and screening features must preserve historic patterns of visually separating public and private spaces while considering overall impacts on the historic district's streetscape.*

### Rationale

Fences are a character-defining feature of many of Sacramento's historic districts, particularly those that are primarily residential in nature. Historically, fences in Sacramento were generally low in height, approximately three-feet-tall; supported by low brick piers or mounted on a stone or concrete curb; and made of wrought iron, wire, or wood. The use of fences created a clear, visual delineation in the broader neighborhood streetscape between the public realm of the sidewalk and street and the private realm of an individual property while remaining subordinate in scale to the building itself. Most were designed to be transparent in nature and, because they were low in height, permitted views of the individual properties that contributed to the visual interest of the street. Because of the impact fences and other types of screening features can have on the overall character of a historic district, special consideration should be made when planning projects that involve these features.

## Design Guidelines

- 4.1 Preserve and maintain historic fences and site walls, wherever possible.
- Replace only portions of historic fences or site walls that have deteriorated beyond repair.
  - Protect historic fences and screening features through regular maintenance, such as painting or staining historic wood fences to protect them against weather or repointing walls with a mortar mix that matches the historic in composition, color, and finish.



Figure 41. A historic wall has been preserved and been incorporated into the design of this new housing development.



- Recycling historic materials, such as brick, to create new fencing of a non-historic design is discouraged, except in rare instances when there is no other way to preserve the feature or material.

4.2 Design new fencing and screening elements so they are consistent with the scale, style, and materials of the historic property and overall historic district.

- New designs should be compatible with the historic features that are visible at surrounding contributing resources in the same historic district.
- The use of materials that are not consistent with the character of the neighborhood—such as chain link, vinyl, and plastic—is prohibited in most instances.
- New fencing designs should be scaled relative to the scale of the building structure and allow views of the primary façade from the public right-of-way, as well as views of the street by the building occupants.
- Replicating historic fencing designs is discouraged, where there is no documented evidence of their existence.

4.3 Scale fences and screening features to avoid obscuring views of historic properties, architectural features, or streetscapes.



Figure 42. The scale, materials, and location of this new fence have been appropriately designed to match the property.



Figure 43. This historic wrought iron fence has been preserved in place.



Figure 44. The scale of this fence is appropriate to the scale of the house; however, the use of chain link is not compatible with the predominately wood materials of the house and overall historic district.



Figure 45. The height and opaque quality of this fence prevents views of the building's primary façade from the public right-of-way, as well as views of the street by the building occupants.



- Fences and screening elements located in front of the primary façade(s) of a building should be transparent in nature and subordinate in scale to the historic features of the property to maintain views of the property that contribute to the overall streetscape.
- 4.4 Place fences and screening features to maintain the visual progression from public to private spaces.
- Fencing and screening features should be placed along property boundaries.
  - Solid fences or walls located at the side of a property should be set back from the primary building façade to maintain historic patterns of open space between individual buildings.
  - Side fences or walls may be taller than those located in front of a property, but taller portions should be set back behind the front plane of the building.

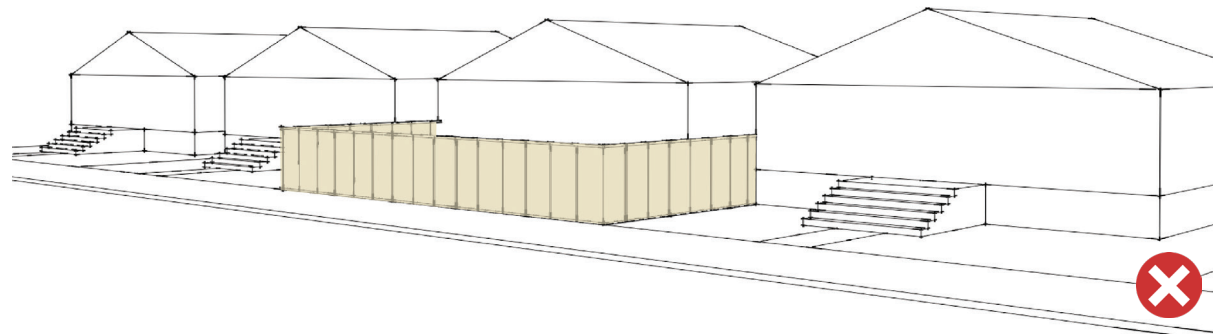


Figure 46. The height and opaque design of this block views of the house from the street.

## Landscape & Planting

### Design Principle

*Maintain and enhance historic patterns of plantings, views, and openness that characterize the transition between the street and individual properties in the historic district. New planting must respect and not destroy historic landscape patterns.*

### Rationale

Landscape design is an important feature that ties together the built environment of Sacramento's historic districts. It affects the pedestrian experience in front of all types of properties, creates or softens the public-private transition between the street and individual properties, and enhances the character of a historic district's overall streetscape.

### Design Guidelines

- 4.5 Preserve and maintain historic landscape features and patterns, wherever possible.
- Avoid altering a property's historic lot grade.
  - If known, historic plantings—particularly historically significant protected trees, shrubs, and garden designs—should be preserved and maintained.

- Avoid installing hard surface paving or synthetic ground coverings in areas that were planted historically and are visible from the street, such as front yards and park strips (the planting strip between the sidewalk and the street).
- 4.6 Design new landscape features to be consistent with the character of the historic district.
- Consider low-lying landscape material where adjoining neighboring lawns, planted areas or sidewalks.
  - Consider using permeable surfaces comprised of natural materials (i.e., stone, gravel) or explore native, drought-resistant plant varieties and arrangements to convey a lush character.
  - Consider the use of synthetic grass (turf) only when it is of high-quality, has a high pile, and is installed by a qualified landscape professional.
  - Avoid impacting views and streetscapes with landscape features that are overly large or out of scale with the neighborhood.
  - Consider neighborhood plant and tree species when selecting new plantings.
  - Supplementing existing tree and shading coverage is encouraged where breaks exist in larger landscape patterns.
- 4.7 Design landscaping that will shade the southern elevation and outdoor space.



Figure 47. Planted front lawns create a distinctive visual pattern on this block.



Figure 48. Lawns in front of these properties have been paved over.

## Lighting & Signage

### Design Principle

*Lighting and signage shall preserve and respond to the character of the historic district while enhancing the public experience.*

### Rationale

Lighting and signage play essential roles in enhancing the character and functionality of a historic district. Lighting is important for public safety and for the security of a property. Exterior lighting can also be used to accentuate landscape design and the overall setting. Signage, meanwhile, provides direction that facilitates the movement of people and creates an attractive and inviting atmosphere, particularly in historic districts with commercial uses.

Lighting and signage are thus key design considerations that should be addressed when planning a project in a historic district.

## Design Guidelines

4.8 Preserve and restore historic lighting and signage, wherever possible.

- Historic signage on all visible facades of the building should be maintained and preserved, when not damaged beyond repair, including painted wall signs and “ghost” signs that may be located on secondary side or rear facades.
- Repair, rather than replace damaged historic lighting or signage. If necessary, replace only parts of historic light fixtures and signage that are deteriorated beyond repair.

4.9 Design new lighting or signage to compliment or enhance the architectural composition and features of the building and the overall character of the historic district.

- New lighting or signage should be designed as an integral part of the building façade and composition.
- Lighting and signage should be placed to enhance and, where possible, fit within existing architectural features. Designs that block or obscure character-defining features are not appropriate.
- Lighting and signage should be designed to be in scale and proportion with the building in order to avoid dominating the building's appearance.
- New designs should use materials that are compatible with the style and character of the building and historic district.



Figure 49. The original marquee of the Crest Theater is a good example of a preserved and restored historic lighting feature that is unique to its property type.



4.10 Design signage and lighting that is pedestrian-oriented and at a human scale.

- Signs should be legible when viewed from the sidewalk.
- The placement of signage should follow historic patterns of sign placement in the historic district.

4.11 Design illumination levels to achieve a complimentary balance between the architecture of the building, character of the historic district, and the design of the sign itself.

- The use of shielded and focused light sources that direct light toward a sign or onto the ground is recommended.
- High intensity light sources that overpower the building or street edge are discouraged.

4.12 Consider the effect of new exterior lights on the historic environment.

- Select fully shielded exterior light fixtures that emit no light upward and are dark sky compliant.
- When installing Light Emitting Diode (LED) light fixtures and bulbs, select “warm-white” or filtered LEDs to minimize blue light emission.



Figure 50. This sign has been designed to be compatible with the historic building in scale, proportion, materials, and placement.



Figure 51. “Ghost” signs add character and visual interest to historic districts.



## Driveways, Parking, & Service Areas

Projects in a historic district that include parking must analyze and respond to the historic circulation patterns found in the historic district. This section focuses on siting or landscaping related to driveways, parking, and service areas. For standards and criteria related to the construction of new carports, garages, or storage structures, refer to the Additions & Accessory Structures section.

### Design Principle

*Driveways, parking, and service areas shall supplement the character of the historic district's streetscape by respecting historic development and circulation patterns.*

### Rationale

The pattern of driveways, parking, and service areas in a historic district is often reflective of the primary time period during which the district developed. Historic properties within Sacramento's Central City typically developed during the 19th and early 20th centuries and frequently do not feature driveways or parking areas. In these areas, ancillary uses, such as carriage storage and automobile parking, historically occurred on the alleys. In contrast, historic properties that developed primarily in the mid-twentieth century were often oriented around the automobile and incorporate driveways and dedicated parking areas into their design. These patterns contribute to conveying the broad historic character of the district.

## Design Guidelines

- 4.13 Avoid adding paved parking pads and large expanses of paving to front yards in residential districts found in the Central City.
- When this is not possible, use pervious materials that allow for turf to screen the paving surface.
  - Avoid displacing lawn, landscaping or site features with parking.
- 4.14 Preserve historic patterns of driveways, service areas, and vehicle storage in the historic district.
- Existing, historic one-car driveways, and the best examples of garages and carriage houses that date to the historic district's period of significance and retain the basic physical features that convey the district's historic significance should remain in their historic locations whenever possible.
  - In the Central City, avoid creating or expanding driveways on street frontages in excess of one-car-width (10' wide) across
  - Avoid creating a new driveway on a street frontage that negatively affects the character of the historic district

4.15 In the Central City, locate new curb cuts for vehicular access at alley or numbered streets, whenever possible.

- In the Central City, driveways on lettered streets should be considered after driveways on alleys and numbered streets prove infeasible.



Figure 52. Parking and service areas are appropriately located along the alley at the rear of these properties.

4.16 In historic districts in the Central City, minimize the visual impact of parking and service areas—including driveways, garages, parking lots, and trash storage—on neighboring historic properties as much as possible.

- Entrances to parking lots, garages, or service areas should be located on the alley, when feasible, or to the rear of the property with access via a side driveway, when alley access is not available.
- Screen parking or service areas with fencing, vegetation, or other landscaping features when possible.
- Consider materials and configurations that minimize visual impacts, such as ribbon driveways that consist of two paved driving strips with turf between the strips.



Figure 53. Climbing plants have been used to screen this parking area from view.

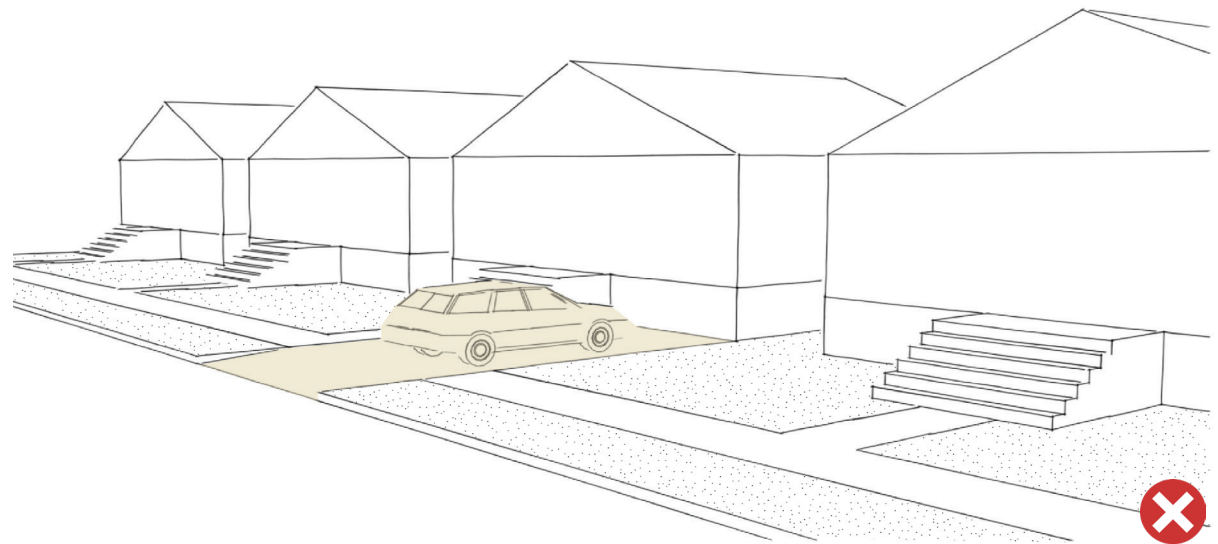


Figure 54. Avoid adding paved parking pads and large expanses of paving to front yards in residential districts found in the Central City.

## Public Right-of-Way Site Elements

### Design Principle

*Preserve and protect site elements in the public right-of-way that define the historic district's established and distinctive streetscape.*

### Rationale

Many site elements that are in the public right-of-way—such as sidewalks, walkways, and street trees—are vital to creating the unique character of Sacramento's historic districts. Although these elements are in the public-right-of-way and maintenance is often under the charge of the City, the relationship and potential effect of projects within historic districts are necessary to consider.



Figure 55. Parking strips planted with rows of mature street trees are a character-defining feature of many of Sacramento's historic districts.

## Design Guidelines

### Street Trees and Park Strips

The City of Sacramento has established that “trees are a signature of the city and are an important element in promoting the well-being of the citizens of Sacramento...[and] that it is in the public interest to protect and manage tree resources within the city in order to preserve and maintain the benefits that they provide to the community.”<sup>2</sup>

Sacramento is often referred to as the “City of Trees” due to the abundance of mature trees that line many streets in the Central City and surrounding neighborhoods. Many of these trees were planted when the neighborhoods in which they are located were originally developed, making them as historic and essential to the visual character of many of Sacramento's historic districts as the buildings themselves.

- 4.17 Preserve and maintain mature trees, wherever possible.
- 4.18 Replace mature trees that have been removed in-kind or with a compatible species.
  - When feasible, replace a removed mature street tree with a specimen of the same species. If replacement in-kind is not feasible, it is recommended to replace the removed tree with a tree that will have a similar form and size when mature.

<sup>2</sup> Sacramento City Ordinance #2016-0026 § 4.

- Replacement street trees should be planted such that the pattern and spacing between established street trees on the same block is maintained.
- 4.19 Preserve and maintain the traditional pattern of street trees and park strips, wherever possible.
- Avoid replacing areas that were historically planted, such as park strips, with hard and or impervious surfaces.
  - Avoid planting species of trees or shrubs in park strips that are inconsistent with the historic landscaping patterns and character of the neighborhood.
  - Restore park strips by removing driveways or other paving that have interrupted the continuous park strip.



Figure 56. Many mature street trees in Sacramento date back to the neighborhood's initial period of development.



## Sidewalks

Although sidewalks are in the public right-of-way, the Sacramento City Code and state law require property owners to maintain and repair public sidewalks in front of their property. The City of Sacramento maintains all curbs, gutters, and pedestrian ramps, as well as any drains that may need reconstruction when curb or gutter repairs are performed.<sup>3</sup>

The visual appearance of sidewalks is closely tied to the quality of a historic district's streetscape and public realm.

4.20 Preserve historic sidewalks and granite curbs, wherever possible.

- Replace only those portions of historic sidewalks or street curbs that are deteriorated beyond repair.
- If a portion of the sidewalk is too deteriorated to repair, consider replacement paving materials that match the historic as closely as possible.

4.21 Maintain the visual progression between public to private spaces.

- In residential areas, the typical tradition of "semi-private" walkways between the "public" sidewalk and a residence's front entrance should be maintained.

4.22 Maintain the existing historic pattern of public sidewalks running parallel to streets.

- Avoid creating new sidewalk shapes and patterns that do not correspond to historic patterns, except where it is necessary to preserve mature trees.



Figure 57. Historic sidewalks contribute to the character of a historic property and the broader historic district.



Figure 58. A historic granite curb.

<sup>3</sup> "Sidewalks, Curbs, and gutters," City of Sacramento, accessed November 26, 2018, <http://www.cityofsacramento.org/Public-Works/Maintenance-Services/Sidewalks-Curbs-Gutters>.



### Hitching Posts, Upping Stones, and Cobblestones

Hitching posts, upping stones, and cobblestone paving are visual reminders of the days of horse-drawn transportation in Sacramento. Surviving examples have become rare as many have been removed over time.

- 4.23 Preserve historic hitching posts, upping stones, and cobblestones wherever possible.
  - If these rare features are in conflict with projects that cannot be avoided, relocation to a compatible site on private property is preferable to demolition.
  - If these features must be removed because they are deteriorated beyond repair or pose a safety hazard, consider documenting the historic features, replacing them in-kind to match the originals, or relocating them to a safe location on private property.
- 4.24 Avoid introducing hitching posts, upping stones, or other elements that are not original to the property or were not documented as having been present during the historic district's period of significance in order to avoid creating a false sense of historical development.

### Utilities

Utilities are essential to modern-day living but can visually interrupt the character and cohesiveness of a historic district when they are prevalent.

- 4.25 Avoid placing above-ground power transformers along primary streets.
  - Use below grade vaults or locate within secondary streets, alleys, or landscaped areas.
- 4.26 Screen or mask above-ground utility boxes from views along sidewalks or primary streets.
  - Coordinated screening techniques, such as the Capitol Box Art Project, are encouraged.

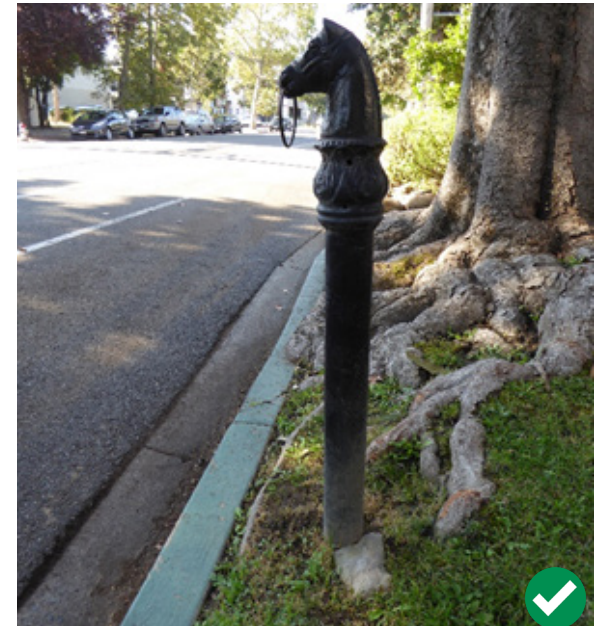


Figure 59. Hitching posts (top) and carriage upping stones (bottom) are visual reminders of Sacramento's horse-drawn carriage days.

## 5. Alley Infill

### Design Principle

*New alley infill, whether on a contributing or non-contributing parcel, must be carefully and thoughtfully designed to demonstrate an understanding of the district's historic context, architectural styles and features, and pattern of spatial arrangements.*

### Rationale

Alleys in the Central City were an integral part of the plan for Sacramento's original, nineteenth-century street grid. The plan called for each city block to be bisected by an alley, which provided dedicated space for auxiliary uses and structures, as well as modestly-sized houses for the city's residents. The pattern of spacing between the main building on a lot and buildings located on alleys varied from neighborhood to neighborhood, resulting in neighborhoods with greater lot density than others. As Sacramento's population grows and development pressures increase, understanding this historic pattern of development and the historic context of the neighborhood can be used to sensitively address the need to increase density in the city's historic districts while preserving the character of these special places.

### Design Guidelines

- 5.1 Design alley infill with an understanding of the historic context, character-defining features, and historic significance of the historic district.
  - Refer to examples of historic resources that strongly contribute to the historic district, rather than non-contributors or inappropriately altered structures.
  - Alley infill on non-contributing properties, including vacant lots, should take design inspiration from surrounding contributing properties.
- 5.2 Develop the scale, proportions, and volumes of alley infill to be compatible with those of adjacent contributing properties.
- 5.3 Take into consideration the height range of existing contributing resources in the district (including roof plate and roof line), when designing new alley infill.
  - Pay special attention to the heights of surrounding contributing resources in the district. New buildings on an alley that are significantly larger than adjacent contributing buildings are discouraged.
  - Minimize the impact of a new building that is significantly taller than surrounding contributing resources by breaking up its mass into smaller components or modules that relate to the scale and massing of the surrounding contributing resources.
  - Step down the height of a taller new alley building when located adjacent to a shorter contributing building.

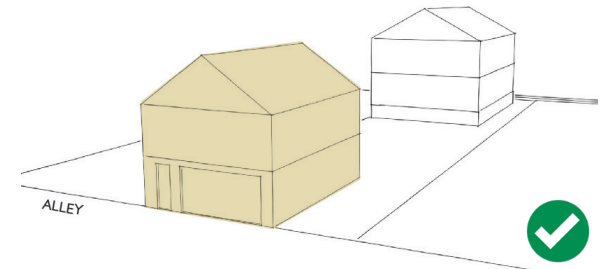


Figure 61. The placement, height, massing, and scale of this alley infill building are appropriate to the contributing building on the lot.



Figure 62. The taller massing of these three-story alley infill buildings has been stepped back from the alley face.

- 5.4 Consider implementing a more restrained use of historic architectural styles and features present in the historic district so that the alley infill does not visually compete with and is clearly subordinate to the district's contributing resources.
- New construction should be reflective “of its time” and avoid mimicking historic styles.
- 5.5 When designing alley infill on a parcel with a contributing resource, draw inspiration from the contributing resource’s character-defining features.
- Consider using materials, datum lines, and facade articulation that complement the contributing resource.
  - The solid-to-void pattern of door and window openings should generally be consistent with that of the contributing resource on the parcel.
- 5.6 Provide adequate space between new alley infill buildings and existing buildings to preserve historic development patterns and prevent overcrowding.
- When adding a new alley infill, respect and consider the prevailing pattern, location, and ratio of building-to-open-space lot coverage that is characteristic of contributing parcels in the district.
- 5.7 Siting of new alley infill should also carefully consider the impact on buildings on adjacent parcels and avoid blocking existing wall openings in adjacent buildings.

- 5.8 Provide side setbacks that are consistent with the historic pattern of spacing between adjacent contributing buildings on the same block.
- 5.9 Orient front entrances, fenestration, balconies, and lighting of new buildings on the alley, unless incompatible with use.
- 5.10 Mitigate views from alley infill into adjacent residential properties.
- Strategically place windows, balconies, and roof decks to protect the private realm of adjacent properties.
  - Consider using landscaping or screening features to respect privacy of semi-private outdoor spaces.
- 5.11 When feasible, provide space for utility units inside new alley infill buildings to promote a pedestrian friendly environment.
- 5.12 Landscaping that enhances the building and alley is encouraged when feasible.



Figure 63. The contemporary design of this alley infill building is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood because of the building's small scale and alley-facing orientation.



Figure 64. The alley infill on the left features a contemporary design that is also compatible with the typical scale, massing, and form of houses in the surrounding neighborhood. It is also well-oriented toward the alley.



Figure 65. Windows and entries facing the alley are recommended. The taller massing of these buildings has also been broken down into smaller components to reflect the scale of buildings in the surrounding neighborhood.