



North 16th Street

Historic District Plan

Physical Description & Boundaries

The North 16th Street Historic District is located in the northern portion of Sacramento’s original 1848 street grid along the blocks surrounding North 16th Street. The district is roughly bounded by former spurs of the Southern Pacific railroad tracks along Ahern Street to the west, Sproule Avenue to the north, the Blue Diamond Growers complex along 18th Street to the east, and the railroad tracks and levee on B Street to the south.



Figure 216. View, looking southwest along North 16th Street.



Figure 217. View, looking southeast along North 16th Street with the W.A. Ward Seed Company building in the middle.



Figure 218. A row of one-story brick warehouses with raised concrete loading docks on North C Street, once part of the Triangle Produce Company.



Figure 219. The U-shaped Sacramento Produce Terminal building on North 16th Street.

Brief Historic Context

The North 16th Street Historic District preserves a concentration of buildings that were once part of a busy industrial and automotive corridor that grew up on the blocks surrounding North 16th Street to the north of Sacramento's central city and directly east of the Central/Southern Pacific Railroad's workshops.

Unlike most areas within Sacramento's original street grid, North 16th Street never attracted substantial residential or commercial development. The street and its surrounding blocks were located near the channel of the American River, where flooding was common. After particularly devastating floods in the winter of 1861-1862, the Central Pacific Railroad, later renamed the Southern Pacific Railroad (S.P.R.R.) in the 1880s, agreed to construct a new northern levee along B Street to aid the city's flood control efforts in return for the right to lay the tracks of its primary transcontinental route along a right-of-way on B Street.¹ The levee and railroad tracks created a physical and visual barrier that cut North 16th Street off from the rest of the city, limiting transportation and access to the area. Additional efforts to protect the city from floods by redirecting the channel of the American River north in 1868 created a flood plain between this new channel and the city where North 16th Street was located. Because of its flood prone nature, development remained limited until 1905, when the original channel of the American River and the swamplands to the north of the river were reclaimed in the early twentieth century.²

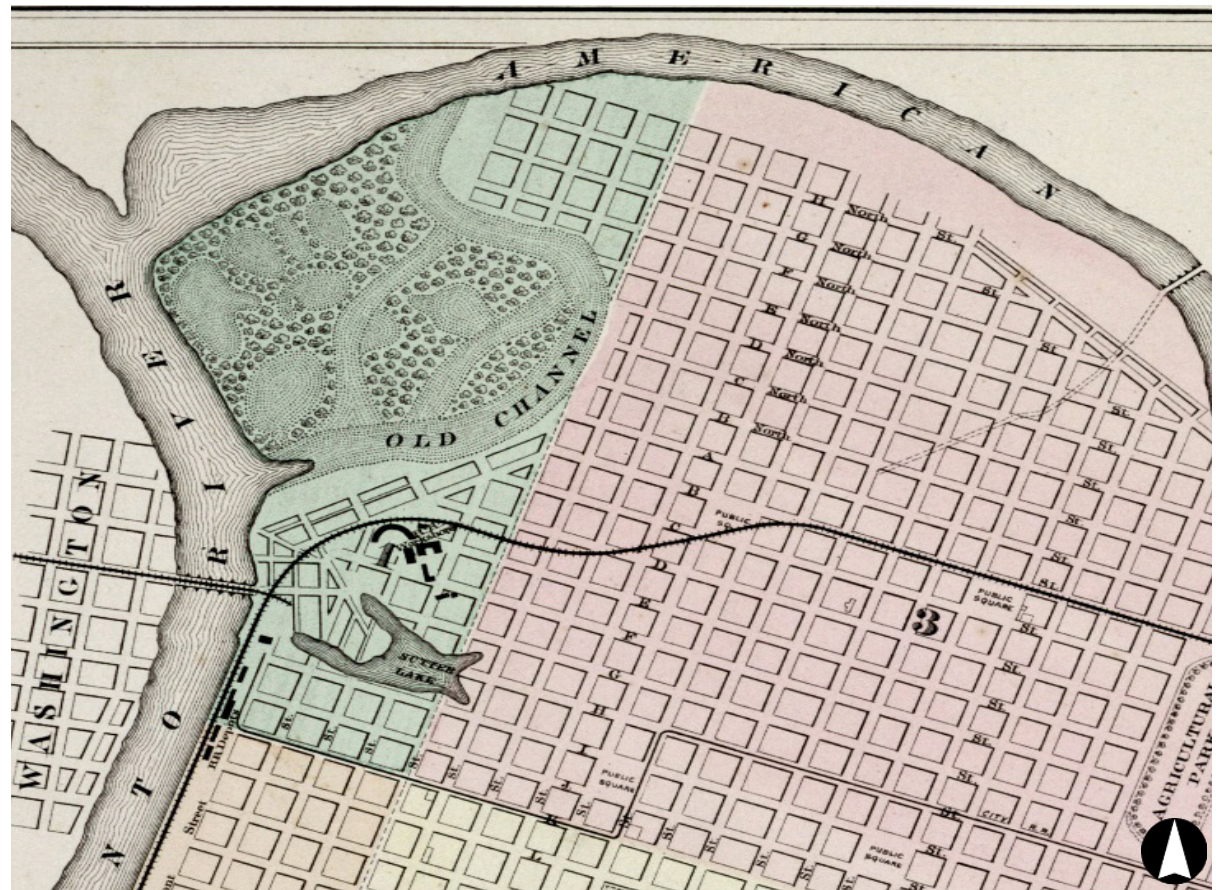


Figure 220. 1874 map of Sacramento, showing the original and new channels of the American River and north section of the city (1874). Source: Library & Archives, California State Railroad Museum, Sacramento, CA, edited by Page & Turnbull.

¹ Richard J. Orsi, "Railroads and the Urban Environment: Sacramento's Story," in *River City and Valley Life: An Environmental History of the Sacramento Region*, ed. Christopher J. Castaneda and Lee M.A. Simpson (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 83-84.

² Historic Environment Consultants, "River District Architectural and Historical Property Survey Update," (report, City of Sacramento, 2009), 9-10.

Land reclamation efforts and improved transportation and access to the area north of the levee spurred development along North 16th Street. In 1915, the 16th Street Bridge was constructed across the

American River as part of the Lincoln Highway, which included a section running down North 16th Street through the heart of Sacramento. The highway was the first coast-to-coast road in the United States



Figure 221. The Schaw, Ingram, Batcher & Co pipeworks situated along a spur of the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks (ca. 1900). Source: Center for Sacramento History, Frank Christy Collection, 1998/722/0299.

and transformed 16th Street into a busy corridor for automobile and truck travel. Automobile camps and businesses oriented toward the automobile and trucking industries sprang up along the road to serve travelers.³ These included the headquarters for two major commercial trucking companies, the Mack Truck International Corp. and F.B. Hart Trucking Co., which occupied the building at 470 North 16th Street at separate times from 1929 until the late 1950s.⁴ Automotive repair shops, parts distributors, and gas and oil stations—such as the Western Body Co. at 235 North 16th Street, Russell Brothers Company at 215-217 North 16th Street, and Flying “A” gas station at 318

³ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

⁴ Paula Boghosian, “Mack Truck International Corp., Crest Carpet Co.,” (DPR 523, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2009).

North 16th Street—were also common along the busy automotive thoroughfare.⁵

Although some small residential subdivisions emerged in the area around North 16th Street, its proximity to the Southern Pacific Railroad’s workshops—and the railroad company’s increasingly noisy, congested, polluting, and dangerous industrial activities—made the street and its environs undesirable to most residents or commercial establishments and dictated that industrial development would dominate the area.⁶ Warehousing and distribution facilities were built in the early decades of the twentieth century, many of which served the agricultural industry and contributed to North 16th Street’s transformation into the principal produce distribution center for the region.⁷ The 1920s were a particularly busy period in which many agricultural companies constructed buildings in the area. In 1925, the W.A. Ward Seed Company built a storage, milling, and cleaning facility for agricultural seeds at 221 North 16th Street. The following year, the Triangle Produce Company occupied several buildings on North C Street, and the Sacramento Produce Terminal opened at 200 North 16th Street as a distribution hub for local produce companies.⁸

⁵ Paula Boghosian, “Western Body Company,” (DPR 523, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2009); Paula Boghosian, “Russell Brothers Company,” (DPR 523, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2009); Paula Boghosian, “Flying ‘A’ Gas Station Building,” (DPR 523, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2009).

⁶ “Railroads and the Urban Environment,” 89-90; Historic Environment Consultants, 10.

⁷ Paula Boghosian, “Sacramento Produce Terminal Building,” (DPR 523, California Office of Historic Preservation, 1998), 2.

⁸ Paula Boghosian, “W.A. Ward Seed Company,” (DPR 523, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2009); Paula Boghosian, “Triangle Produce Building,” (DPR 523, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2009); Paula Boghosian, “1501 N. C Street,” (DPR 523, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2009); Paula Boghosian, “Sacramento Produce Terminal Building.”

Other industries also moved into the area in the 1920s and 1930s, drawn by its easy access to several major transportation routes, including the primary tracks of the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Lincoln Highway, which later became State Route 160 and U.S. Route 40. Many of these distribution buildings and warehouses were constructed beside spurs of the Southern Pacific Railroad’s tracks and designed with curving sides to conform to the tracks.⁹ Schaw, Ingram, Batcher & Company (later the Sacramento Pipe Works), a steel pipe manufacturing plant, operated at the corner of North 16th and North B streets from 1923 through the 1970s.¹⁰ Other businesses in the area included beverage distribution companies, a manufacturing plant for heavy-duty scales, and oil storage facilities.¹¹

Tenants came and went over the decades, but fire insurance maps published by the Sanborn Map Company in 1952 show that an agricultural and industrial character persisted through the middle of the twentieth century. By then, the California Packing Corporation’s canning operations had expanded from its site on C Street to several buildings on North 16th Street, including the former Triangle Produce Company complex. The Sixteenth Street Bean and Grain Cleaner occupied facilities on the same block.¹² Many automotive businesses continued to line the corridor, especially to the north where North 16th Street connected to two major freeways.

⁹ Boghosian, “Sacramento Produce Terminal Building,” 1.

¹⁰ Paula Boghosian, “Sacramento Pipe Works,” (DPR 523, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2009).

¹¹ Paula Boghosian, “Acme Beverage Co.,” (DPR 523, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2009); Paula Boghosian, “1610-1620 North C Street,” (DPR 523, California Office of Historic Preservation, 2009).

¹² Sanborn Map Company, Sacramento, California [map], vol. 1, 1915-Jan. 1951.

North 16th Street's status as a major distribution point for agricultural produce and automotive center began to shift in the 1960s. In 1963, the deep water channel of the Port of Sacramento opened in West Sacramento.¹³ The Port was built to serve as an inland port for the agricultural industry and specialized in the movement of agricultural goods.¹⁴ Its completion drew this kind of activity away from traditional shipping and distribution centers in Sacramento.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the construction of interstate highways around the city diverted automotive traffic from older transportation corridors, such as North 16th Street.¹⁶ By 1966, the railroad spurs that had played an integral role in the development of an industrial corridor along North 16th Street were taken out of service and removed.¹⁷

By the 1980s, many of the industries that had contributed to North 16th Street's vibrance were declining. In 1981, the California Packing Company closed its Del Monte canning facilities, which had employed many Sacramentans. Blue Diamond Growers moved into the company's canning facilities along the B Street levee a few years later. Also in 1981, the Southern Pacific Railroad's workshops, which had driven much of the industrial development of North 16th Street, began to shrink in size and labor force. The

workshops finally closed in 1999.¹⁸

Throughout its history, North 16th Street's predominately industrial character and isolation from the city had attracted homeless, transient, and off-season agricultural workers to the area, a characteristic that persists in the twenty-first century. The proximity of the Southern Pacific Railroad depot contributed to the influx of homeless men to the area, due to the subculture of "hobos" who traveled the country by jumping on and off freight trains.¹⁹ During the Great Depression, Hoovervilles of makeshift shelters sprang up along the American River, levees, and railroad tracks north of Sacramento. These encampments were home to thousands of unemployed workers.²⁰

Drawn by the population of homeless and transients residing in the area, religious and charitable organizations, such as Loaves and Fishes, moved into several buildings along North 16th Street after the industrial and agricultural tenants moved out in the 1980s and began serving the surrounding community. They continue to occupy a large portion of the historic district, particularly the former industrial buildings on North C Street.²¹ Meanwhile, commercial and recreational businesses have replaced earlier agricultural and industrial tenants on North 16th Street.

13 Steven Avella, *Sacramento: Indomitable City* (San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 124.

14 "Sacramento Deep Water Ship Channel Limited Reevaluation Report (LRR) with Project Economic Analysis," (report, US Army Corps of Engineers, 2011), https://www.spn.usace.army.mil/portals/68/docs/srdwsc/appendix_e.pdf.

15 Environmental Science Associates, "R Street Corridor Historic District Survey Report," (report, City of Sacramento Preservation Commission, 2017), 8.

16 William Burg, *Sacramento's K Street: Where Our City Was Born* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), 137-183.

17 Dudek, "Cultural Resources Report for the Blue Diamond Growers (BDG) A Street Annex Building Project," 2018, 20.

18 Avella, 147-148.

19 Historic Environment Consultants, 12.

20 Gary Brechin and Lee M.A. Simpson, "Unseen Investment: New Deal Sacramento," in *River City and Valley Life: An Environmental History of the Sacramento Region*, ed. Christopher J. Castaneda and Lee M.A. Simpson (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 187.

21 Historic Environment Consultants, 13.

Significance

The North 16th Street Historic District was designated for listing on the Sacramento Register of Historic and Cultural Resources by the City Preservation Commission in 2011 in Ordinance #2011-011. At that time, it was determined to meet all of the requirements and factors for listing as defined by Sacramento City Code.

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 Agricultural; Railroad; and World War II, Transportation, and Redevelopment Context Statements of the city’s General Plan Technical Background Report.

(B) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts	
(1) Requirements	
(a)	The North 16 th Street Historic District meets requirement (a) for listing on the Sacramento Register, because it is a geographically definable area.
(b)(i)	<p>The North 16th Street Historic District meets requirement (b)(i) for listing on the Sacramento Register as an area that possesses “a significant concentration or continuity of buildings unified by: (A) past events or (B) aesthetically by plan or physical development.”</p> <p>The properties in the district are unified aesthetically and thematically by their development in one of Sacramento’s primary industrial centers. The design and development of the buildings reflect their original industrial function and share similar patterns of development and design. They were strategically located along spurs of the railroad and the major highway connection of North 16th Street in order to efficiently transport goods to market. Reflecting their utilitarian use, the buildings were constructed largely out of unpainted brick in vernacular styles with minimal decoration or embellishment. Many buildings include loading bays and curve to conform to the adjacent railroad tracks. The continuous use of several of these buildings for industrial or commercial purposes is a testament to the functionality of their design. Despite decades of use, renovations, and in some cases neglect, the buildings continue to reflect their historic character.</p>
(b)(ii)	<p>The North 16th Street 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 historic district preserves a collection of buildings that are representative of Sacramento’s role as the main terminal and produce distribution point for the region’s agricultural industry from the early- to mid-twentieth century. In particular, the resources in the district reflect the invaluable connection between the establishment of the Central and Southern Pacific Railroads in Sacramento and the growth of these agricultural industries, both of which represented the major employers for the city’s workforce and contributed to Sacramento’s development into a major metropolitan city.</p>
(c)	The North 16 th Street 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.”

Period of Significance: 1905-1963

The period of significance for the North 16th Street Historic District begins with the reclamation of the former channel of the American River and surrounding area by 1905, after which development of the industrial corridor began, and ends with the opening of the Port of Sacramento in 1963, which diverted agricultural shipping and distribution activity away from North 16th Street.

Property Types from the Period of Significance

- Industrial
- Commercial

Architectural Styles from the Period of Significance

- Vernacular
- Spanish Revival
- Commercial Types:
 - One-Part Commercial Block
 - Two-Part Commercial Block

(B) Listing on the Sacramento Register – Historic districts	
(2) Factors to be considered	
(a)	Factor (2)(a) states that “a historic district should have integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship and association.” The North 16 th Street Historic District retains sufficient integrity to meet this factor for consideration as a historic district.
(b)	Factor (2)(b) states that “the collective historic value of the buildings and structures in a historic district taken together may be greater than the historic value of each individual building or structure.” The North 16 th Street Historic District meets this factor because its buildings and structures represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose collective historic value is greater when taken as a whole.

Character-Defining Features

The following table is based on the list of character-defining features in Ordinance #2011-011 and revised based on the 2018 historic district survey.

Element	Character of Historic District
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily industrial buildings with some commercial buildings concentrated along 16th Street
Mass & Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various sized one- to two-and-one-half story buildings (with high floor to ceiling dimensions), ranging from large footprint warehouse/distribution/manufacturing buildings to smaller accessory or commercial buildings Some exterior walls curve along adjacent rail spur alignments Interiors of many are large open areas
Cladding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Predominately unpainted brick, corrugated metal, reinforced concrete, concrete block, plaster, or wood siding Wood timber truss or metal support structures
Roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flat or bowed roofs, often with stepped, arched, or variously shaped parapets Corrugated metal or clay tile roofs
Entries & Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large truck bays, concrete loading docks, truck ramps primarily located along the east-west streets
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrial metal sash windows Some commercial buildings with large, showroom windows on first stories, generally along North 16th Street
Ornamentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spanish Revival details, such as clay tile ornaments Decorative cornices Blind arches
Property Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most buildings and structures are built to property lines and oriented to transportation alignments, whether streets or railroad tracks for car-, truck-, or rail-related operations Minimal or no property landscaping
Streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most east-west streets and rail spur alignments dominated by transportation and loading functions and are not developed with standard curbs, gutters, sidewalks, planter strips, or street trees Railroad tracks of the rail spurs

Boundaries & Location

The following map shows the boundaries and location of the North 16th Street 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 222. Map of the North 16th Street Historic District. Source: City of Sacramento and Page & Turnbull, 2019.

District-Specific Standards & Criteria

Design Principle

Preserve the defining visual characteristics of this historic industrial and commercial corridor while encouraging a diverse range of businesses and mixed-use development that increases use and improve safety and walkability.

Rationale

The North 16th Street Historic District contains a significant concentration of industrial and commercial buildings related to Sacramento's railroad and agricultural history that has the potential to become a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood like the R Street Historic District. While the buildings are generally large in scale and share similar utilitarian materials and design features, they also exhibit a variety of floorplan shapes, roof forms, and façade treatments that create a visual richness from which future development in the area could draw inspiration. Underutilized buildings, vacant parcels, and parking lots in the historic district present opportunity sites for future development; however, the district's location along a busy arterial highway, presence of homeless services and tent cities, and minimal streetscape improvements has historically depressed development that would increase foot traffic and introduce new uses to the area.

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 North 16th Street Historic District.

1. Rehabilitation of Contributing Resources

- 1.1 Preserve and enhance the historic street-facing orientation of primary building facades and entrances.
- 1.2 Preserve, repair, and maintain any surviving steel frame windows, which significantly contribute to the industrial character of the district.
 - Reinstall multi-lite steel or wood frame windows, where they have been removed, if there is adequate documentation and if feasible.
 - Replace missing historic street-facing windows where feasible, if there is adequate documentation to inform design.



Figure 223. Building facades and entrances in the district are oriented toward the street.

- 1.3 Avoid painting or applying new finishes on historically unpainted exterior masonry, particularly where historic painted signs (ghost signs) are present.
 - Consider removing paint or finishes from historically unpainted exterior masonry, using the gentlest methods possible, during exterior repairs or renovations.
 - Maintain paint on exterior masonry where likely to be the historic condition.
- 1.4 Restore window and door openings that have been covered or filled in, where appropriate.
- 1.5 Preserve and reuse historic loading platforms.
 - Encourage reuse of these platforms as part of streetscape improvements to enhance the pedestrian experience.
 - Recreate historic loading platforms using concrete or other compatible material.
- 1.6 Retain existing historic awnings, where possible.



Figure 224. Steel frame windows have been preserved and maintained in this adaptively re-used building.

2. Additions & Accessory Structures for Contributing Resources

- 2.1 Design additions with proportions that are compatible with the primarily low, horizontal massing of contributing buildings in the district.
- Additions on secondary rear and side elevations are preferred in most situations.
 - Where rooftop additions are desired, use step backs in order to maintain the existing street façade height of the contributing building.
 - Respect open areas that are part of historic configuration or building siting, such as open areas at loading or service zones, to the extent feasible.



Figure 225. Open areas, such as the courtyard in this U-shaped produce distribution building, reflect their historic use as spaces for vehicle maneuvering.

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

- 3.1 Orient taller building masses and primary facades of new construction toward North 16th Street.
- Use step backs to maintain the existing street façade height of adjacent contributing resources.
- 3.2 Maintain the visibility of varying building profiles, shapes, and forms in the historic district.
- Avoid designs that result in rows of identical facades or buildings.



Figure 226. Buildings in the district have little or no setback from the street and exhibit a variety of roof shapes.

- 3.3 Preserve the historic pattern of siting new buildings with a zero-lot-line setback from the street.
- 3.4 Use materials that are compatible with the industrial or commercial character of adjacent contributing buildings.
- The use of brick, corrugated metal, steel casement windows and other utilitarian materials that are visible on adjacent contributing buildings is encouraged.
- 3.5 Incorporate awnings that reference the form, scale, and materials of historic awnings.
- 3.6 Draw inspiration for building footprints from the variety of footprints that are visible in contributing buildings in the historic district, ranging from rectilinear to curved or U-shaped.



Figure 227. Historic awnings on contributing buildings may serve as an inspiration for the addition or design of compatible new awnings.

- 3.7 Design roofs to maintain the visual variety of roof lines exhibited by contributing buildings, including medium- or low-pitched gabled, flat, or rounded roofs, and square, stepped, or rounded parapets.
- 3.8 Follow pattern of large garage door openings that open out onto raised platforms (historically loading bays).
- 3.9 Set back or break down new construction into smaller modules to preserve the historic use of open areas as vehicle maneuvering spaces, while allowing for a more active use.

4. Site Features, Streetscape, & Landscaping

- 4.1 Pursue a “complete street” approach that enhances pedestrian safety while preserving the historic district’s minimally landscaped industrial character.
- 4.2 Explore the addition of public art that corresponds to the district’s industrial scale.
- 4.3 Add sidewalks that are compatible with the district’s industrial character to improve pedestrian safety and encourage additional foot traffic.
 - Develop a street furnishing and lighting palette that is industrial in character, scale, and material.
- 4.4 Preserve and enhance the visibility of surviving physical elements that are associated with the railroad spurs that historically serviced the area (i.e. tracks, siding, end-of-track bumpers).
 - Explore developing pedestrian paths and circulation around former railroad track routes.
- 4.5 Provide site and landscape features that address curved building facades where railroad spurs influenced building shape.
- 4.6 Remove chain link fences and barbed wire where consistent with the property’s use.
 - Replace chain link fences with fences that are of a compatible material and height to historic or compatible new fences at contributing properties in the historic district



Figure 228. Features associated with the historic presence of railroad spurs enhance the historic character of the district.